



**DEPICTION OF WOMEN  
IN THE SOURCES OF THE DELHI SULTANATE  
(1206-1388)**

**THESIS**

*SUBMITTED FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF*

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In  
**HISTORY**

BY

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## **qCENTRE OF ADVANCED STUDY**



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### **Certificate**

*This is to certify that the thesis “**Depiction of Women in the Sources of the Delhi Sultanate (1206-1388)**” by **Ms. Farhat Jahan** is the original research work of the candidate, and is suitable for submission for the award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in History.*

**DR. ROOHI AHMAD**

**(SUPERVISOR)**

**Dedicated  
To  
My Parents**



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## **Abstract**

Gender studies are emerging as an upcoming trend in recent past. Such studies have immensely added to the existing knowledge. The focus has however largely been enjoyed by modern Indian history. A study probing women in Medieval India is therefore always welcome. Fortunately enough, Delhi Sultanate has received comprehensive appraisal in varied primary sources ---- The official chronicles, versified accounts, Malfuzat literature. The present study is an attempt to evaluate the depiction of women in the rich content of primary sources of Delhi Sultanate.

Medieval society is presupposed to curtail women activity. Constraints of social practices, and customs like *purdah*, *sati*, dowry etc. were deterrents in the everyday life of aristocracy and lay woman. The present study intends to identify the zones in which women activity took part. The chapter layout classifies these arenas. Current issues viz. gender discrimination, overarching patriarchal setup, rural urban dichotomy is also meted out in the course of discussion in the chapter schema.

The present study propels the data on participation of women in the realms of imperial politics, religion, work, education and other society related matter to show that women also played quite important roles freely and equally in all walks of life and contributed for the continuation and development of culture, her existence was in no way marginalized in medieval set up.

The Thirteenth and Fourteenth Century India witnessed the emergence and consolidation of Muslim rule there. This era can be seen as a formative phase in the establishment of the Muslim rule in India. Political authority and state structures that emerged in these two centuries, influenced the exercise of power, authority patterns and political institutions in ensuing centuries and still continue to inform them to a certain extent. The Delhi Sultanate is also important because a majority of its subjects were native non-Muslim, primarily Hindu by faith, whereas the ruling elite was predominantly comprised of Muslims, who were either migrants from West and Central Asia, Iraq, Arabia, Persia and Afghanistan or were the descendants of these migrants.

In the present work we see that women enjoyed considerable influence and gave their contribution in every walk of life. In political arena they played significant role, as we have seen

in the case of Raziya Sultan, when there was hardly any reference of women ruling over the Indian subcontinent. She was even not questioned by the Islamic jurists. Iltutmish nominated her to the throne of Delhi as his successor after the death of his most capable son, Prince Nasiruddin Mahmud.

After the death of Iltutmish, Ruknuddin Firoz, occupied the throne and ruled for seven months before Raziya secured the throne of Delhi. In order to rule the country, she ignored the traditionalism regarding dressing of Indian women and welcomed the male attire. Raziya appeared in public with *quba* (cloak) and *kulah* (hat). She used to dress up as a man when appearing in public, be it the court or the battlefield.

Her major achievement lay not in quelling the stout opposition or curbing the disruptive forces but in administering peace and tranquility and creating an environment for good governance. In spite of the strife and conflicts both internal as well as external, she beefed up the administration and provided new vigour to the Turkish Empire. On the military front, she defeated one of their principal leaders' *wazir* Muhammad Junaidi so convincingly that he retired from active politics. Soon she was successful in winning over most of the remaining nobles to her side.

Raziya dispensed justice without discrimination along with the *qazis* and *muftis* who attended the audience hall. She held a court every week in which the earlier arrangement of female guards and the screen was done away with, and transacted state business in the manner of male sovereigns.

Besides Raziya, there were some other influential royal ladies who actually participated in politics but behind the veil. In this context we find the significant role played by Shah Turkan, the wife of Sultan Iltutmish. She influenced the Sultan and the nobility so much that she was able to interrupt the succession issue and placing her son Ruknuddin Firoz to the throne. She ruled over the country on behalf of her son by issuing royal *farman* in her name.

We have also seen the role played by *Malika-i- Jahan*, wife of Sultan Jalaluddin Khalji. She got a respectable position in the nobility. After the death of her husband, she placed her younger son, Qadar Khan to the throne with the support of the nobility because she thought it dangerous to keep the throne vacant. Unfortunately she was unsuccessful while ruling over the

country on behalf of her son. Then she wrote a letter to her elder son Arkali Khan to come and take the crown of her father, he refused. And Alauddin Khalji, her son in law took the advantage of the strained situation and occupied the throne. Such instances show that women were respected in political field and even nobility was with them.

During the time of Mohammad Tughluq, women were given due regard and allowed to meddle in the government. In case of *Makhduma-i- Jahan*, we have seen that she was an elderly lady, yet she enjoyed considerable say viz a viz her son Sultan Mohammad Tughluq. Likewise, Khudavandzada, the sister of the Sultan equally enjoyed respectable place in politics.

Interesting dimensions are afforded from the visual images of women, as paintings are one of the most important and unique source to provide first hand information. These paintings reflect social status of women, contemporary customs and habits and also the glimpses of the composite culture. Indian painting during Fourteenth and Fifteenth Century flourished well in Northern, Western and Eastern India. We find many beautifully illustrated manuscripts at Gujarat, Mandu (Malwa), Jaunpur and Delhi etc.

Few examples of these paintings are *Kalpasutra* and *Kalakacharya Katha* from Gujarat, *Kalpasutra* painted at Mandu, *Kalpasutra* painted at Jaunpur, a folio from *Khamsa* of Amir Khusrau, folio from *Hamzanama*, folio from *Sikandarnama*, folio from *Laur-Chanda* and folios from *Nimatnama*.

Religion is yet another aspect; we see that women came forward, participated in mystic trend -- Sufism and Bhakti movement. Women continued to play an important role as Sufis and as the mothers of leading Sufis. During the period under review references are found of a number of ladies who were known for their piety and religious outlook. Noteworthy in the content are, Bibi Zulaikha, Bibi Auliya, Bibi Qarsum Masuma, Bibi Sharifa, Bibi Sara, Bibi Raasti, Bibi Fatima Saam, Bibi Fatima, Bibi Raani and Khadiji, etc. The said ladies had even developed spiritual prowess and could perform acts of miracles.

Sometimes we see women conforming to the duty assigned to them. Women at work are subsequent concern, in order to identify the kind of role they performed. They were not only confined to household like rearing children, carrying water, collecting fuel, cooking food, serving meals, food transportation, tending cattle, spinning cloth but also involved in responsible jobs of guards, accountants, spies, and messengers. Besides household chores, they were



involved in professional and entertainment spheres - women as dancers and singers, courtesans, and public women etc.

The institution of slaves continued to flourish during the Sultanate period. No study of the life and conditions of women in India during the period, is complete without a reference to female slavery. Female slaves were also imported from China and Turkistan etc. The prostitutes and courtesans were an important profession too. The prostitution in India was inseparably associated with professional entertainers.

An attempt has also been made to highlight some social institutions, which are particularly associated with women as marriage, divorce, widowhood, *purdah*, their education, *sati* and *jauhar* etc.

The princesses of the royal families were educated by learned teachers. Generally education was imparted to the girls at home and the curriculum largely consisted of religious subjects. Amir Khusrau prescribes that the women of royalty should be well versed in the use of arms. The emergence of Raziya as an accomplished Sultan, indicates that princesses were subjected to military training along with primary education. She was an accomplished poetess and could recite the holy Quran correctly. Thus being women of literary taste, she stood for the cause of its propagation. She patronized men of letters and Madarasa-i-Nasiriya of Delhi became the centre of learning during her reign.

Thus we discern a comprehensive and multi faceted role of medieval women, which was in no way restricted by society and ideology. The depiction of women in the sources brings out a vital role being played by the women folk.

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## Introduction

Research investigation on women have recently gained considerable spate. The major concern has been on different roles of women and their adherence to norms and duties. Position of women has been another concern of scholars. Fresh studies like health have been raised in recent past. This trend situates women related history within the broad spectrum of social history.

In the context of Medieval India, the interest of much of the conventional historiography being centred on polity and statecraft, women have been largely ignored.<sup>1</sup> Social historians do focus on women who are confined to the household or the domestic sphere. Mention worthy is Altekar's effort in his pioneer work, *Position of Women in Hindu Civilization from pre Historic Times to Present Day*, in which he emphasizes women and her position, right from the ancient times to the modern day.<sup>2</sup> A major breakthrough is achieved in K. M. Ashraf's work, *Life and Conditions of the People of Hindustan*, where social history figure's prominent. Women are seen as restricted to the performance of domestic chores alone.<sup>3</sup>

There is plethora of literature dealing with the various aspects of the Sultanate of Delhi. These aspects include the imperial court and the factional politics, state, administration and administrative reforms, military history, society and economy. In addition several works pertain to the role and achievements of individual Sultans of Delhi and various dynasties of the Sultanate.

The major works deals with the political aspect with reference to the Delhi Sultans, Habibullah A.B.M., *The Foundation of Muslim Rule in India*,<sup>4</sup> Nizami K.A., *A Comprehensive History of India*<sup>5</sup> etc. These works primarily deal with the political developments in the Sultanate of Delhi. Some of them are largely descriptive, whereas a few of them offer analysis on political developments as well.

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<sup>1</sup> Prasad Ishwari, *History of Medieval India*, Indian Press, Allahabad, 1966 ; Tripathi R.P., *Some Aspects of Muslim Administration*, Central Book Depot, Allahabad, 1975; Nizami and Habib, eds. *Politics and Society During Early Medieval Period*, Delhi, 1981.

<sup>2</sup> Altekar A.S., *Position of Women in Hindu Civilization from pre Historic Times to Present Day*, Motilal Banarsidas, Banaras, 1956.

<sup>3</sup> Ashraf K. M., *Life and Conditions of the People of Hindustan*, Munshiram Manoharlal, Delhi, Second Edition, 1970.

<sup>4</sup> Habibullah A.B.M., *The Foundation of Muslim Rule in India*, Central Publishing House, Allahabad, 1989.

<sup>5</sup> Nizami K.A., *A Comprehensive History of India*, Vol. V., People's Publishing House, New Delhi, 1970 and Reprint, 1982.

Some works on the Sultanate of Delhi deals with the history of a particular dynasty. For instance, Aziz Ahmad's *Political History and Institutions of the Early Turkish Empire of Delhi* (1206- 1290 A.D.)<sup>6</sup> studies the political history and political institutions of the Ilbari dynasty of the Turks ruling the Sultanate of Delhi during the Thirteenth Century. Similarly, K.S. Lal's *History of the Khalji's* (1290- 1320 A.D.)<sup>7</sup> and Agha Mahdi Husain's *Tughluq Dynasty*<sup>8</sup> focus on the study of the Khalji and Tughluq Dynasties likewise Banerjee J.M. focuses *History of Firoz Shah Tughluq*.<sup>9</sup> In these works we find the reference of women only for name sake.

Another genre of works comprises significant works focused on women which are the main concern of my topic. These works provide valuable information about the condition of women in Medieval India mainly Jamila Brijbhushan, *Sultan Razia- Her Life and Times*.<sup>10</sup> Rekha Misra , *Women in Mughal India*<sup>11</sup>, Lokesh Chandra Nand, *Women in Delhi Sultanate*,<sup>12</sup> Hambly, Gavin R.G, *Women in the Medieval Islamic World*.<sup>13</sup> Likewise, K. N. Chitnis in *Socio- economic History of Medieval India*<sup>14</sup> etc. has given an overall view of social history including women in Medieval India.

A paradigm shift towards women's history took place almost everywhere throughout the world around 1970s which triggered the emergence of women's studies in India too. The work on women however remained anecdotal. There is no interpretation or any type of dissection being offered in those works.

The present work, deals with women in Delhi Sultanate, in the chapter layout, a sincere attempt has been made to explain, on the basis of primary as well as existing secondary sources, the position occupied by women during Thirteenth and Fourteenth Century A.D. The study aims at bringing women to the centre of historical process and attempts at studying the socio- political history of the Delhi Sultanate with the women's perspective. To explore that women also played quite important

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<sup>6</sup> Mohammad Aziz Ahmad, *Political History and Institutions of the Early Turkish Sultans of Delhi* (1206-1290), Oriental Books Corporation, New Delhi, First Edition, 1972.

<sup>7</sup> Lal K.S., *History of the Khaljis*, Munshiram Manoharlal, New Delhi, Revised Edition, 1980.

<sup>8</sup> Husain Agha Mahdi, *Tughluq Dynasty*, S. Chand and Co. Ramnagar, New Delhi, Reprinted, 1976.

<sup>9</sup> Banerjee J.M., *History of Firoz Shah Tughluq*, Oriental Publishers, Delhi, 1967.

<sup>10</sup> Jamila Brijbhushan, *Sultan Raziya- Her Life and Times*, Manohar Publication, New Delhi, 1990.

<sup>11</sup> Misra Rekha, *Women in Mughal India*, Delhi, 1967.

<sup>12</sup> Nand Lokesh Chandra, *Women in Delhi Sultanate*, Vohra Publishers, Allahabad, First Edition, 1989.

<sup>13</sup> Hambly Gavin R.G., eds. *Women in the Medieval Islamic World*, Hampshire, Macmillan Press, Houndmills, Basingstoke, First Published., 1998.

<sup>14</sup> Chitnis K.N., *Socio-Economic History of Medieval India*, Atlantic Publishers and Distributors, New Delhi, 1990.

roles freely and equally in all walks of life and contributed for the continuation and development of culture.

Earlier studies on the social history of the Sultanate period concern mainly on the social life in general and included a description of women. The role of women in politics, their participation in different professions has not earned attention.

In order to conduct the present study, I have based mainly on the scrutiny of primary sources categorized as chronicles, official histories and Sufi literature. I have culled information from the following Persian chronicles and Sufi literature; Minhaj-us-Siraj Juzjani, the author of *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, held important offices Qadi, Khatib (literally meaning the one who delivers sermon, the preacher) and *imam* (prayer leader) simultaneously was the *qazi* of Delhi under Sultan Shams-uddin Iltutmish. *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri* consists of twenty three *Tabaqat* (sections), this work contains the historical events right from the beginning of the world to 1261 A.D. i.e. the sixteenth year of Nasiruddin Mahmud's reign. Sultan Raziya also appointed him the incharge of Madarasa-i- Nasiriya. Therefore this source provides us the first hand information for the period of Raziya. He takes into account the political events of her reign year wise.

Similarly, Ziauddin Barani, the renowned Fourteenth Century political theorist and historian and the author of *Tarikh-i- Firozshahi*, held the privilege of being a courtier of Sultan Mohammad Tughluq for nearly seventeen years. He starts with the Balbani era and ends with six regnal year of Firozshah Tughluq. The work was composed in 1359 A.D. during the reign of Sultan Firozshah Tughluq, to whom it was dedicated as well.

Barani has given the political happenings for the period of Sultan Jalaluddin Khalji and Alauddin Khalji. Here we find the reference of *Malika-i- Jahan*, wife of Sultan Jalaluddin Khalji, her influence on her husband, and relation with her son in law, Alauddin Khalji etc. Barani has graphically described her interference on political issues. After the death of her husband, she intervened in the issue of succession and placed her younger son Qadar Khan with the title of Ruknuddin Firoz. He also furnishes information on dancing girls, singers etc. in the court of Sultan Jalaluddin Khalji. He deals with the strained marital relationship of Alauddin Khalji.

Likewise, Shams Siraj Afif, the author of *Tarikh-i- Firozshahi*, was a regular attendant at the court of Sultan Firozshah Tughluq. Afif's *Tarikh-i-Firozshahi* is a life sketch of Firozshah Tughluq, ( 1351-88 A.D. ) written subsequent to Timur's invasion of 1398 A.D. It is divided into five *qisms* each sub divided into eighteenth

*muqaddimahs*. The work was composed during Sultan Firozshah, to whom Afif dedicated it as well.

He supplies information on Khudavandzada, the sister of Sultan Mohammad bin Tughluq, who intervened in the issue of succession after the death of the Sultan Mohammad Tughluq and put forward the claims of her son Dawar Malik<sup>15</sup> to the throne. Afif also tells us that she hatched a conspiracy to kill Firozshah Tughluq.

*Futuh-i-Firozshahi* is a brief account by Firozshah Tughluq of his own edicts and ordinances, the abuses and evil practices abolished by him, the buildings erected and the works of public utility carried out in his reign.

Malik Izzuddin Isami composed his poetical work *Futuh-us-Salatin* (*Shahnamah-i-Hind*) in 1348-50 A.D. during the reign of Sultan Mohammad bin Tughluq. He was critical to Raziya when she discarded *purdah* and appeared in *qaba* (Cloak) and *kulah* (hat).<sup>16</sup> He also casts a slur on the character of Raziya for the appointment of Yakut, an Abyssinian slave on the post of *Amir-i-Akhur*.

The famous Moroccan Traveller, Ibn Battuta who visited the court of Sultan Mohammad Tughluq, lived here for several years and wrote his travelogue under the name of *Rehla*, is a very significant source of information. He was received at the capital by the queen mother *Makhduma-i-Jahan* who was seen in her old age by the traveler as the mother of the ruling Sultan Mohammad Tughluq. She was the queen dowager, held the prestigious title of *Makhduma-i-Jahan*<sup>17</sup> (mistress of the world). Besides this, Ibn Battata has given a detailed account of common women like, slaves, dancers, singers and rituals and customs, social evils like *sati*, *purdah* etc. related to women folk.

Court historian Amir Khusrau who was a court poet of Sultan Alauddin Khalji, has partly covered the historical developments of the Sultanate era. He composed *Khazain-ul-Futuh*, which is an official history of the military campaigns of Sultan Alauddin Khalji. He has dealt with various rules and regulations. To improve the moral values of the society, Sultan Alauddin Khalji took measures to stop this

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<sup>15</sup> Afif Shams Siraj, *Tarikh-i-Firozshahi*, eds. M. Wilayat Husain, Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta, 1890, p. 45.

<sup>16</sup> Isami Malik Izzuddin, *Futuh-us-Salatin*, eds. M. Usha, University of Madras, Madras, 1948, p. 133.

<sup>17</sup> Ibn Battuta, *Rehla*, Beirut Lebanon, 1964, p. 502.

abominable profession of prostitutes to be lawfully married.<sup>18</sup> He also provides a list of clothes belonging to reigning Sultan Alauddin Khalji.<sup>19</sup>

*Hasht Bihisht* (the eight paradises) the fifth and the last poem of the *Khamasa*, an initiation of Nizami's *Haft Pakar* contains 3,350 couplets. In this work Amir Khusrau prescribes that women should be pure in thought and deed. He emphasizes on chastity of women, to observe *purdah* etc. He has also written about their ornaments, beauty aids etc.<sup>20</sup>

In *Matla-ul- Anwar*, Amir Khusrau recommends to preserve the moral values of women and also to maintain integrity.

In *Ijaz-i- Khusravi*, Amir Khusrau accounts for social galaxy in which both guest and host took part in dance and music. He also gives information that women are very particular about their physique. They apply various beauty aids like *Gulguna* and *Ghaza*<sup>21</sup> and adorn apparels like *Paicha shalwar*, *Nagarah*, *Dotah*, *Dastar* etc.<sup>22</sup>

*Nuh Siphir* is also a famous work of Amir Khusrau, in which we find information regarding variety of cloths and about *sati* system etc.<sup>23</sup> He has also described about the ornaments worn by women. He observes that women wore tight and transparent cloth.<sup>24</sup>

*Dewal Rani Khizr Khan* also known as *Ashiq* or *Ishqiya* is the story of Khizr Khan and Dewal Rani. The central theme of the poem is the romantic love and the tragic fate of Khizr Khan, the son of Sultan Alauddin Khalji and the beautiful princess Dewal Rani, the daughter of Rai Karan of Gujarat. It throws invaluable light on the life and conditions of royalty during the medieval period. The education and training of the princes and princesses their involvement in palace intrigues, their private life and fratricidal conflicts are presented in the *masnavi*.

Besides these there are some Sufi literature which I have utilized in my work. Prominent among them are, *Akhbar-ul-Akhyar* the famous *Tazkira* authored by Sheikh Abdul Haq Muhaddis Dehlavi, is the most complete and reliable biography of

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<sup>18</sup> Khusrau Amir, *Khaizain-ul- Futuh*, Tr. Mohammad Habib, *Campaigns of Alauddin Khalji*, D. B. Taraporewala sons and co., Bombay, 1931 , p. 11.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 13-14.

<sup>20</sup> Khusrau Amir, *Hasht Bihisht*, M.S.S., University Collection, 29 (2), Maulana Azad Library, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, Folios, 29- 30.

<sup>21</sup> Amir Khusrau, *Ijaz-i- Khusravi*, Vol. V., eds. Nawal Kishore, Lucknow, 1976, pp. 136- 37.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. I., p. 109.

<sup>23</sup> Khusrau Amir, *Nuh Siphir*, M.S.S. part., VII, Habibganj Collection, 50/16, Maulana Azad Library, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, folio. 22.

<sup>24</sup> *Nuh Siphir*, M.S.S. part., VII, op. cit., folios. 45-46.



Indian Sufis of the four main orders- Chishti, Qadaris, Shattaris and Suhrawardis which flourished between the Thirteenth to Sixteenth Century. K.A. Nizami <sup>25</sup> considers *Akhbar-ul- Akhyar* as the best product of Abdul Haq's erudition, scholarship and scientific research.

*Siyar-ul- Auliya* by Mir Khurd is a biography of the lives of *Chishti* saints written in the reign of Firozshah Tughluq (1357-88 A.D.) divided into 10 babs.

*Siyar-ul-Arifin* by Sheikh Jamali is a biography devoted to the lives of 14 *Chishti* saints completed in Humayun's reign. *Siyar-ul- Arifin* has been referred to discuss the scholarship of some scholars of the sultanate period.

*Fawaid-ul- Fuad* is the *malfuzat* (table talks) collected by Amir Hasan Sijzi. Ziaul Hasan Faruqi describes *Fawaid-ul- Fuad* as a literary work of great distinction in many respect.<sup>26</sup>

*Khair-ul- Majalis* is a record of one hundred mystic gatherings of Sheikh Nasiruddin Chiragh Delhi. Not only is it a source of information of the lives of several Indo- Muslim saints, but also supplies information on the political and economic conditions of the time.

As for the historical accounts of near contemporary and later sources such as Yahya bin Ahmad Sirhindi's *Tarikh-i- Mubarakshahi*, Abdul Qasim Ferishta's *Tarikh-i- Ferishta*, Nizamuddin Ahmad Bakhshi's *Tabaqat-i- Akbari* and Badauni's *Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh*, they have largely depended on the above mentioned contemporary sources. They also provide some additional historical data and explanation which cannot be substantiated from any contemporary sources. Such additional information which is largely based on hearsay cannot be uncritically accepted since it does not stand the test of the principles of historical criticism.

The Thirteenth and Fourteenth Century India witnessed the emergence and consolidation of Muslim rule there. This era can be seen as a formative phase in the establishment of the Muslim rule in India. Political authority and state structures influenced the exercise of power, authority patterns and political institutions in ensuing centuries. The Delhi Sultanate brought interface a majority of its subjects the native non-Muslim, primarily Hindu by faith, and the ruling elite was predominantly comprised of Muslims, who were either migrants from West and Central Asia, Iraq,

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<sup>25</sup> Nizami K.A., *Hayat-i- Abdul Haq Muhaddith Dehlavi*, Nadwat-ul- Musaniffin, Delhi, 1953, pp. 200-02.

<sup>26</sup> Sijzi Amir Hasan, *Fawaid-ul-Fuad*, Tr. Ziya-ul-Hasan Faruqi, K. Print Works, New Delhi, 1996, p. 59.

Arabia, Persia and Afghanistan or were the descendants of these migrants. Women in Turkish society enjoyed a measure of freedom and were treated at par with men. They took active role in matters related to peace or war, rode side by side with their men and were skilled in the use of lance and bow.

In the above perspective our focal theme *Depiction of Women in the Sources of the Delhi Sultanate (1206-1388 A.D.)* seems a welcome investigation. In this study, we propose to outline the arena of women activity during the Sultanate period. With this intention the classification of the theme into chapter layout has been made. This classification indicates involvement of women in the political affairs. Thus the first chapter undertakes the study of Raziya Sultan as the first lady monarch of the Indian subcontinent. Interestingly enough during the Sultanate rule in India, inspite of the widely prevalent *Purdah* system which was strictly adhered to, particularly among aristocracy, how women participated in politics.

The reign of Raziya Sultana is remarkable from this stand point as she was the first lady to ascend to the throne in Delhi during the Sultanate period. We also wish to explore how the chroniclers like Minhaj, Ferishta etc. rate her military, administrative and political acumen. Raziya Sultan, was the first female Muslim ruler of South Asia. Iltutmish nominated her to the throne of Delhi as his successor after the death of his most capable son, Prince Nasiruddin Mahmud.<sup>27</sup> It would therefore be of interest to investigate the pros and cons such as reaction of the Muslim jurist, nobility, royal *harem*, and above all the people of Delhi.

The second chapter entails the involvement of *harem* with pivotal role being played by the royal ladies in the imperial politics. It is equally significant to gauge the prestige of the prominent ladies namely Shah Turkan, wife of Sultan Iltutmish, *Malika-i- Jahan*, wife of Sultan Jalaluddin Khalji, *Makhduma-i Jahan* and Khudavandzada, the mother and sister of Sultan Mohammad bin Tughluq respectively.

How far the women of the royal household enjoyed privileged position and directly affected the course of events, we should first analyze their role. What was their reckoning in relation to the emperor, nobility, other royal ladies and the people at large.

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<sup>27</sup> Ferishta Abdul Qasim, *Tarikh-i- Ferishta*, Vol. I., eds. Nawal Kishore, Lucknow, 1865, p. 68.

The visual illustrations are a mine of rich information which has escaped due attention of historians. We have presently culled interesting facets from the varied collection of *Kalpasutra* and *Kalkacharya Katha* from Gujarat, *Kalpasutra* painted at Mandu, *Kalpasutra* painted at Jaunpur, a manuscript of *Khamisa* of Amir Khusrau, Folio from *Hamzanama*, Folio from *Sikandarnama*, Folio from *Laur Chanda* from Jaunpur and Folio from *Nimatnama* painted at Mandu for our understanding of women.

Paintings acknowledged as one of the most important and unique source to provide first hand information has as yet escaped to the attention of scholars with regard to women folk. These are no less meaningful than the contemporary chronicles since they provide the information in an illustrated form. This fresh source has been tapped in order to study the social status, contemporary customs and habits and also the glimpses of the composite culture, in the context of women folk.

The significance of paintings is immense because Thirteenth Century marks the advent of the immigrants from Central and West Asia from varied cultural social and political backgrounds. They accommodated themselves to the customs and cultures of India. This resulted in synthesis of external with indigenous in the realm of art, architecture, literature, music, technology and social and political institutions. In the field of miniature painting or portraiture the Indo Persian School has got its unique place in all Asiatic schools of art.

These paintings trespass the confines of central structure because interestingly enough Indian painting during Fourteenth and Fifteenth Century flourished in Northern, Western and Eastern India. We find many beautifully illustrated manuscripts at Gujarat, Mandu (Malwa), Jaunpur and Delhi.

In Gujarat one finds numerous Jain illustrated manuscripts, notably prior to the second half of the Fourteenth Century. These Jain manuscripts were illustrations on palm leaves.

After about 1450 A.D., however, we have material, howsoever limited, to suggest the growth of a *bourgeois* style of illustrating Persian classics in some of the Sultanate provinces.<sup>28</sup> In the *bourgeois* style attention may be drawn to some illustrations from the *Khamisa* of Amir Khusrau Dehlavi of which twenty four folios have been traced is relevant. To the group of *Khamisa* of Amir Khusrau, an illustrated

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<sup>28</sup> Khandalavala and Moti Chandra, *New Documents of Indian Painting- A Reappraisal*, Board of Trustees of the Prince of Wales Museum, Bombay, 1969, p. 45.

manuscript of the *Sikandarnama* of Nizami, about the middle of the fourteenth century can also be added here. This new tendency to illustrate the Persian classics, romances and story books is further evidenced by the extensively illustrated copy of the *Hamzanama*, dealing with romantic adventures of Amir Hamza.

In the closing years of the Fifteenth Century the taste of Indian painting extended its field to Vaishanava subjects and love poetry. We find the illustration of *Laur-Chanda*, the versified romance of Laur, the hero, and Chanda, his beloved in the Awadhi dialect of Hindi, which is spoken only in certain areas of eastern U.P.<sup>29</sup> composed by Mulla Daud.

During the time of Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq (1460-1500A.D.), the successor of Mahmud at Mandu (Malwa), we find a cookery book, the *Nimatnama* which was illustrated for his son Nasiruddin (1500-1510A.D.)<sup>30</sup>. Certain traits of the Turkoman style of Persian painting were adopted during this time which is quite evident from the illustrations of *Nimatnama*. The text of the *Nimatnama* deals with the most detectable recipes of all kinds with prescription for medicine, aphrodisiacs, cosmetics, perfumes and occasional direction for their use and a section on hunting etc. This exploration would throw interesting side lights on the involvement of women in these realms.

Whatever meager evidences are available in our sources, will be surveyed to investigate women's active participation in the context of religion. What role women played as Sufis and as the mothers of leading Sufis. The prominent ladies who were known for their piety and religious outlook. Noteworthy in the context are Bibi Zulaikha, Bibi Auliya, Bibi Qarsum Masuma, Bibi Sharifa, Bibi Sara, Bibi Raasti, Bibi Fatima Saam, Bibi Fatima, Bibi Raani and Khadiji had even developed spiritual prowess and could perform acts of miracles. In Hinduism, with the advent of Bhakti movement women's role became very positive as well.

The second last chapter of my thesis entails the survey of women involved at work and in household chores. In professional and entertainment spheres - women as dancers and singers, professional women, entertainers, domestic slaves, public women and concubines etc.

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<sup>29</sup> Havell E. B., *The Art Heritage of India*, D.B. Taraporevala Sons and Co., Bombay 1964, p. 115.

<sup>30</sup> *The Arts of India*, op. cit., p. 127. But Khandalavala and Chandra have the opinion that it is misbelieved that it was done by his son Nasiruddin, *New Documents of Indian Painting- A Reappraisal*, op. cit., p.59.

It is intended to gauge involvement of majority of common women, revolved around domestic jobs like rearing children, carrying water, collecting fuel, cooking food, serving meals, food transportation, tending cattle and spinning cloth.

The institution of slaves continued to flourish during the Sultanate period. The main source of obtaining slaves were by capture and purchase. The main means of their disposal were by manumission and sale. Prisoners of war were also an important source to obtain slaves.<sup>31</sup> No study of the life and conditions of women in India during the period is complete without a reference to female slavery. Since these female slaves had an access to the royal court, they were well acquainted with the etiquette of the court.

In the last chapter, an attempt has been made to glance the social institutions related to marriage, divorce, the costumes, the preferred apparel, ornaments, cosmetics and women as victims of social evils like *purdah*, *sati* and *Jauhar* etc. In what manner men acted as custodians of the honour and chastity of women. Several verses of the Quran emphasize alike the dignity of men and women in the society.

An appraisal of literati content regarding morality by prominent scholar like Amir Khusrau and Barani would be immensely interesting. Equally interesting would be the survey of make and nature of garments of women, the variance between apparels of women of royalty, common women, female slaves, dancing girls and public women. The popularity of ornaments among females as well as several aids of beauty used by women to add their charm.

By the Tenth Century A.D. India became famous as an important Islamic country to which Muslims thronged from all parts of the Islamic world. So the nature and mode of education was whether or not based on the same pattern as imparted in other Islamic countries. Khalji and Tughluq patronage to depute teachers to various parts of the empire for the sake of imparting instruction to the people. The manner in which princesses of the royal families were educated by learned teacher has also been incorporated in this work.

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<sup>31</sup> *Campaigns of Alauddin Khalji*, op. cit., p. 33.

# Chapter I

## Raziya Sultan: The First Lady Monarch of India

The political theory of Islam is brief in character; therefore it does not dwell explicitly on the question of women's eligibility to the throne. What is noteworthy is that for the secular and ecclesiastical purport leadership centred around the office of *imam* or *caliph*. The orthodox jurists adhered to this formula, however certain modifications were incorporated as and when the need arose. As for instance, the Abbasid caliphate was followed by the independent states.<sup>1</sup>

This chapter entails the theme related to Raziya, her enthronement, her difficulties related to enthronement and after coming to the throne. And the main focus is on her administration, dealing with the nobility, curbing the power of the Turks, which had become a threat to the crown, her coin and currency system, and how she ruled over the country where there was almost no reference of any woman ruling over the country at least in India. But regarding her fall, there are factors related to woman ruling over the male chauvinism, which created problem for her. The nobility which was powerful since the time of Sultan Iltutmish, conspired against her and brought an end to her glorious reign.

Here in this chapter, I have based my work on the primary sources as *Tabaqat-i- Nasiri* of Minhaj-us Siraj, *Rehla* of Ibn Battuta, *Tarikh-i- Ferishta* of Abdul Qasim Ferishta and *Futuh-us Salatin*, of Abdul Malik Isami etc.

There appears to be the difficulty regarding her inability to lead. In a purely theoretical sense a female ruler, could not lead congregational prayers. This was a duty imparted by the *imam* or Sultan. The other difficulty was her status as legal witness. It is learnt that the former duty came to be delegated to *khatib* and Sheikh-ul-Islam. The *imam* addressed rare ceremonial occasions.<sup>2</sup>

Interestingly enough, from the Turkish ascendancy over Islamic world, no constitutional principle or regulation forbade female sovereign. As a matter of fact,

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<sup>1</sup> *Al- Mavardi*, quoted by Arnold, *Caliphate*, p. 71. Cf. Habibullah A.B. M., 'Sultanah Raziah', *Indian Historical Quarterly*, December, 1940, p. 750.

<sup>2</sup> Ibn Khaldun, *Muqaddama*, p. 208. Cf. *Sultanah Raziah*, op. cit., p. 751.

the Turkish Sultans included unmanumitted slaves and individuals with physical handicaps also.<sup>3</sup>

The Turkish racial traditions did not restrict female sovereign. In the Twelfth Century the Khitai Turkish women ruled certain principalities. Example of the widow of the deceased Gur Khan and his daughter Koyunk Khatun<sup>4</sup> can be cited in the context. Minhaj-us Siraj provides information of one of the feudatory rulers of *Khwarizm* (Khiva) who was succeeded early in the same century by a daughter, who enjoyed the power and title even after her marriage. Safia Khatun, widow of the Ayubide prince, Malik al- Zahir son of Salahuddin<sup>5</sup> and Shajarat al- Durr are other examples. The latter bore the title *Malikat al- Muslimin*, and issued coins and edicts and had the *Khutba* read in her name along with that of the Abbasid Caliph, al-Mo'tasim.<sup>6</sup>

Queen Humai or Khumai, daughter of Bahram, who succeeded her father and abdicated after a reign of thirty years<sup>7</sup> in a legend of the Median dynasty shows all sort of examples can be cited in the context.

During Sultanate period the political structure and the ruling elite did not encourage women to participate in politics. In spite of this we get references when females of the royal household exercised authority in the political sphere.

It will be borne out by our discussion in this subsequent chapter that in spite of the widely prevalent *Purdah* system which was strictly adhered particularly in royal families, women did participate in politics usually indirectly and rarely directly. The role of Raziya Sultan is remarkable from this perspective as she was the first lady to be elevated to the throne in Delhi during the Sultanate period. She is admired by the chroniclers like Minhaj and Ferishta of the Sultanate period for her military and political acumen.

Sultan Raziya, the only woman in India crowned as queen in her own right had a brief though eventful reign. She was de jure the fifth Muslim ruler of Delhi but de facto the third, two predecessors, one of them her brother, whose reign was short lived and not worthy of note.

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<sup>3</sup> *Sultanah Raziah*, op. cit., p. 752.

<sup>4</sup> Juzjani Minhaj –us Siraj, *Tabaqat-i- Nasiri*, Tr. Raverty H.G., Vol. II., Oriental Books, New Delhi, 1970, pp. 927-28.

<sup>5</sup> Abul Feda, *Tarikh* ( Egyptian ed.) III, p. 171. Cf. Habibullah A.B.M., *Sultanah Raziah*, op. cit., p. 752.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. *Sultanah Raziah*, op. cit., pp. 752- 53.

<sup>7</sup> *Tabaqat-i- Nasiri*, Tr. Raverty, Vol. I., op. cit., pp. 3-4.

Raziya had the unique distinction of being the only woman who ever occupied the throne of Delhi. She ascended the throne in 18<sup>th</sup> Rabi I, 634 A.H. / 19<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1236 AD.<sup>8</sup> She was from Turkish Seljuk's ancestry and fifth Mumluk Sultan of Delhi Sultanate. She was the very first woman ruler in Muslim and Turkish history. Raziya was elevated to the throne solely because of her merit and talent.<sup>9</sup> It was a paradigm shift considering that the throne was considered as a monopoly of males.

As regards her early life, suffice to say, that she was the daughter of Sultan Shamsuddin Iltutmish from his most respected and favoured wife, who was the daughter of Qutbuddin Aibak.<sup>10</sup> She had benefited from the tutelage of her father when she had lived with him in the *kushk-i firozi* (royal palace). We find only brief sketch of her early life in the contemporary sources. Since her childhood, she had shown her interest in learning the art of warfare and she had learnt to command armies. As a child and adolescent, Raziya had little contact with the other women of the *harem* so she had not adopted the customary behaviour of women in the Muslim society.

Even in her father's lifetime, she used to be active in the affairs of the state, and exercised great authority and influence.<sup>11</sup> She took keen interest in male sports unlike the other aristocratic ladies who preferred to remain behind *purdah*. Raziya Sultan was encouraged by her father to take interest in the army organization and assuming command that developed in her leadership qualities, responsibility and bravery as her characteristics. She preferred the adornment of male attire instead of traditional regarding dressing of Indian Muslim women.<sup>12</sup>

Iltutmish found his sons incompetent and saw in Raziya the quality befitting a ruler. During her father's reign, Raziya displayed courage and ability to participate in the state affairs<sup>13</sup>. She was the first female Muslim ruler of South Asia. Iltutmish nominated her to the throne of Delhi as he, faced with the choice of a successor on the untimely death of his eldest and most capable son, Prince Nasiruddin Mahmud in 629

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<sup>8</sup> *Tarikh-i-Ferishta*, Vol. I., op. cit., p. 68. But Isami in *Futuh-us-Salatin*, curiously enough, places her accession in 635 A.H./ 1237 A.D., op. cit., p. 133.

<sup>9</sup> *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, Tr. Raverty Vol. I. op. cit., p. 637.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. I., p. 638.

<sup>11</sup> *Political History and Institutions of the Early Turkish Empire of Delhi (1206- 1290)*, op. cit., p. 195.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> Juzjani Minhaj-us-Siraj, *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, Vol. I., eds. Abdul Hai Habibi, Anjuman-i-Tarikh-i-Afghanistan, Kabul, 1963. p. 458; *Futuh-us-Salatin*, op. cit., p. 133; *Tarikh-i-Ferishta*, Vol. I., op. cit., p. 68.



A.H. / 1229 A.D. He selected his daughter Raziya, as she was the eldest of his surviving children, and had already been marked out for uncommon sagacity and political insight.

To try her still further, Sultan Iltutmish left her incharge of the administration during the year he was engaged in operations against the Parihara ruler of Gwalior in 1231 A.D.<sup>14</sup> She must have discharged her duties singularly well,<sup>15</sup> for immediately on his return announced his choice and ordered Tajul Mulk Mahmud, the *Mushrif-i-Mumalik*, to issue a *farman* elevating Raziya as heir to the Sultanate.<sup>16</sup> And a proclamation to that effect was ordered to be drafted. A commemorative coin was also struck in silver, possibly issued as a medallion, with the name of the crown princess inscribed along with that of Iltutmish.<sup>17</sup>

After the death of Iltutmish, Ruknuddin Firoz, one of his sons occupied the throne and ruled for about seven months before Raziya secured the throne of Delhi. She established the rule of law within the country. She used to dress up as a man when appearing in public, be it the court or the battlefield. Raziya assumed sovereignty adopting the title of *Raziyat-ud-din*<sup>18</sup> and endowed with a position to make full use of the statecraft which she had learnt under the tutelage of her father.

Her major achievement lay not in quelling the stout opposition or curbing the disruptive forces but in administering peace and tranquility and creating an environment for good governance. In spite of the strife and conflicts both internal as well as external, she beefed up the administration and provided new vigour to the Turkish Empire. Factional politics was at its zenith after the creation of forties by Iltutmish. This faction intervened in every political issue, including succession. The financial condition was also deplorable due to Sultan Ruknuddin's extravagance<sup>19</sup> and mismanagement. It was Raziya's tact, diplomacy and firm determination which enabled her to govern ably. Her military skill with administrative ability established her firmly in the central administration.

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<sup>14</sup> *Tarikh-i-Ferishta*, Vol. I., op. cit., p. 68.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*; *Futuh-us-Salatin*, op. cit., p.133.

<sup>16</sup> *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, Vol. I. op. cit., p.458; *Tabaqat-i Nasiri*, Tr. Raverty, vol. I., op. cit., p. 638

<sup>17</sup> Wright, Nelson, *The Coinage and Metrology of the Sultans of Delhi*, Munshiram Manoharlal, New Delhi, 1974. no. 161 A, p. 40. where this is ascribed to Raziya and on the strength of a similar but better preserved specimen is dated 635 / 1237, a year after Iltutmish' death.

<sup>18</sup> *Futuh-us-Salatin*, Tr. Agha Mahdi Husain, Vol. II., Asia Publishing House, Printed at Department of History, A.M.U. Aligarh. 1976, p. 252.

<sup>19</sup> *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, Vol.I., op. cit., p. 455; *Futuh-us-Salatin*, op. cit., p. 131.

The army and the people of Delhi were solidly behind her. She needed all the support she could get for many of her most powerful governors who were in revolt against her. It was in tackling them that Raziya gave evidence of her immense sagacity and political maturity. On the military front, she defeated one of their principal leaders' *wazir* Muhammad Junaidi so convincingly that he retired from active politics. Soon she was successful in winning over most of the remaining nobles to her side.

The nomination of Raziya was not questioned by the *ulema* on religious ground,<sup>20</sup> but from nobility and close associates of the Sultan. The Sultan pacified them by stressing upon the competence and merit of Raziya with respect to other princess who took refuge in worldly pleasures and showed no sign of taking interest in state affairs.<sup>21</sup>

But with the support of nobility and his mother, Ruknuddin Firoz was elevated to the throne. But the Sultan's indolent, luxurious nature coupled with the maladministration of Shah Turkan caused turmoil in the Sultanate.<sup>22</sup> Shah Turkan's prime objective was to keep the throne safe and secure for her son. Unfortunately her conspiracy to imprison and kill Raziya bore no fruits.<sup>23</sup> Raziya continued to enjoy the support of citizens of Delhi, both during its invasion by the rebel *amirs* and later, when her enemies had to lure her out of the capital in order to encompass her.

In view of Shah Turkan, the queen mother's ill treatment Raziya, made an appeal to the people to save her from her evil machinations.<sup>24</sup> She utilized the general discontent against Ruknuddin Firoz most cleverly to her advantage. Clad in the red garment<sup>25</sup> of an aggrieved person, she had appealed from her palace to the populace, assembled for the Friday prayers to gain popular support.<sup>26</sup> In the name of her father she bid respite from Shah Turkan and Ruknuddin Firoz who let loose a reign of terror in the Sultanate.<sup>27</sup>

In the enthusiasm and loyalty to the memory of Iltutmish that she was able to rouse, it was easy not only to have Shah Turkan and her son seized, but also to have

<sup>20</sup> Nizami K.A., *Some Aspects of Religion and Politics During the Thirteenth Century*, Idarah-i-Adabiyat-i- Delli, New Delhi, 1974, P.172.

<sup>21</sup> *Tabaqat-i- Nasiri*, Vol.I., p. 458.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 456; *Tarikh-i- Ferishta*, Vol. I, p. 67.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 457- 58.

<sup>25</sup> *A Comprehensive History of India*, op. cit., p. 236.

<sup>26</sup> Ibn Battuta, *The Rehla of Ibn Battuta*, Tr. Mahdi Husain, Oriental Institute, Baroda, 1953, p. 34.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

her own right to the throne, by virtue of her father's proclamation, recognized and given immediate effect to. She could base her claim also on the fact that after Firoz's dethronement and death, she happened to be the eldest of the surviving children of the late monarch. Her universally recognized superior ability was another important asset and the citizens, led by the army officers, unanimously acclaimed her as the rightful Sultan and successor to the throne of Iltutmish.<sup>28</sup>

The choice and judgement of Iltutmish no doubt, stood vindicated. But the provincial governors felt humiliated as they were not consulted in this matter. They resented it and Raziya proceeded to deal with them. It appears that a sort of understanding was reached between Raziya and the population of Delhi who extended their support in elevating her to the throne.<sup>29</sup> Under these circumstances Raziya made up her mind to act boldly after her speech. The people stormed the palace and seized Shah Turkan.<sup>30</sup> Raziya enjoyed the co-operation and support of the masses for the task of administering the Sultanate.<sup>31</sup>

Ruknuddin Firoz returned to Delhi but the temper of the capital was against him. The army as well as the *amirs* had joined Raziya, pledged allegiance to her and placed her on the throne. She immediately sent a force to arrest Ruknuddin Firoz. He was imprisoned and probably put to death on 19<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1236 A.D., after the reign of six months and twenty eight days.<sup>32</sup>

No constitutional objection to the proposal was evidently expected, and indeed, none was raised. The representation of the courtiers, to consider the decision quoted by Minhaj, was obviously made on the political inadvisability of the superseding a grown up son, equally eligible for the throne, and thus creating a possible cause of discord.<sup>33</sup> This apprehension was finally and completely removed by Iltutmish's assurance, strengthened by their own observation that "after my death no one will be found more worthy of heir- apparentship than her." That the jurist of Delhi did not view the prospects of a female sovereign with marked disfavor is evident from the language of Minhaj, a reputed lawyer and *qazi* of the empire.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>28</sup> *Futuh –us- Salatin* , op. cit., p. 132.

<sup>29</sup> *The Foundation of Muslim Rule in India*, op. cit., p. 99.

<sup>30</sup> *Tabaqat-i- Nasiri*, Vol. I., op. cit., pp. 458- 59; *A Comprehensive History of India*, op. cit., p. 236.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 460; *Tarikh-i- Ferishta*, Vol. I., op. cit., pp.67-68.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 456.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

It is important to remember that he had no reason to show undue deference to Raziya as he had to his own patron, Balban and Mahmud, and writing more than twenty years after the event, he would have certainly pointed out the illegality of the proceedings if he thought there was any. It is true that he regrets the fact that she, with all her eminent qualities fit for a sovereign, was not born as a man.

This obviously is not a legal opinion but an expression of the prevalent attitude of the male sex to whom a woman was always *naqis-al- aql* (of weak intellect) and like children utterly unreliable. This statement is further supported and elaborated by Isami.<sup>35</sup>

There is also reason to believe that there was no hesitation on the part of the *qazis* and *khatibs* and other ecclesiastical dignitaries of the capital in taking the oath of allegiance to the new Sultan or incorporating her name as the rightful ruler in the *khutba*.

Despite certain courtiers' appeal challenging her claim to the throne, no constitutional objection was raised. The Muslim jurist also did not question the legality of such a proposal.<sup>36</sup> It appears to be that some of the nobles could not reconcile with the idea of a woman ruling over them.<sup>37</sup> Their objection was purely a gender bias not accepting the interference of female in the affairs of sovereignty which they seem to be their exclusive prerogative. But after her ascendancy to the throne all things returned to their usual rules and customs.<sup>38</sup> And she carefully removed all miscreant provincial officers and substituted them with men of her own choice to the provincial governments. All those who opposed her succession on one ground or the other, were imprisoned and she carried on her administration successfully for about four years.

The people of Delhi were for the first time part of succession and Raziya offered them a sort of contract, which mentioned that if she is unable to solve their problems she would abdicate the throne.<sup>39</sup> Thereafter the support of the Delhi population constituted the main source of Raziya's strength. So long as she did not

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<sup>35</sup> *Futuh – us- Salatin*, Tr. Agha Mahdi Husain, Vol. II., op. cit., p. 254.

<sup>36</sup> Tripathi R.P., *Some Aspects of Muslim Administration*, Central Book Depot, Allahabad, 1958, pp. 28-30.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> *Tabaqat-i- Nasiri*, Vol.I., op. cit., p. 458.

<sup>39</sup> *Futuh -us-Salatin*, op. cit., p. 132.

move out of Delhi, no uprising against her could succeed and no palace conspiracy could be successful.<sup>40</sup>

Raziya's accession to the throne carries great political significance in the history of the Delhi Sultanate, because it was marked by several striking features. It shows the intellectual maturity of the Turkish mind in accepting a woman as ruler. And also indicates that there is nothing in Islam which bars women from public office although it was taboo and contrary to Islamic culture<sup>41</sup> of those times. The fact remains that the army,<sup>42</sup> the officers and the people of Delhi had placed Raziya on the throne. Naturally the provincial governors, who constituted a very powerful section of the Turkish governing class, felt ignored and humiliated and consequently Raziya had to deal with their opposition.<sup>43</sup>

Her accession to the throne established that the highest positions even that of a sovereign were open to the females. It indicates the broadminded attitude of the Turkish gentry which was ready to give full consideration to the merits of the individuals, irrespective of the gender bias. The example set by Raziya gradually became a source of inspiration and encouragement to the other royal ladies to participate in politics. Raziya rose to the occasion in order to fulfill her responsibilities, a fact even her worst critics can't deny. Her debut to power shows her politically alert personality. There could be no better time for a coup of the type that Raziya planned and so ably carried through.

A perusal of contemporary primary sources would facilitate gauging the varied appraisal of Raziya's personality. According to Minhaj-us Siraj- "She was endowed with all the admirable attributes and qualifications necessary for kings".<sup>44</sup>

### **Raziya's Difficulties:**

As they say uneasy lies the head that wears the crown, so also Raziya had ascended to the throne amid extreme difficulties. Far less courageous spirits might well have been dismayed by the difficulties that bristled all around her. Her supporters consisted of the defected military leaders and the common citizens of Delhi.

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<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> *A Comprehensive History of India*, op. cit., pp. 237- 38.

<sup>42</sup> *The Rehla of Ibn Battuta*, Tr. Mahdi Husain, op. cit., p. 34.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> *Tabaqat-i- Nasiri*, Vol. I., p. 460.

Although she was immediately raised to the throne, an oath of allegiance was obtained from the people, these comprised presumably from all classes of the population. There was no spare time for the elaborate ceremonials of a coronation. The insurgent *maliks*,<sup>45</sup> unaware of this turn of events, were steadily approaching the city to establish once again their exclusive right of appointing the ruler.

Information of Firoz's imprisonment and Raziya's accession did not abate their hostility for their contention now appeared to be, not that Raziya had no right to rule, but that her accession having taken place without their previous consent, was not binding on them. The *wazir*, Nizam-ul-Mulk Junaidi<sup>46</sup> who was absent from the capital when this coup occurred, also considered his own right to be consulted. He joined forces with the insurgents and was supported by such eminent Turkish nobles as Malik Alauddin Jani, Izzuddin Muhammad Salari, Malik Saifuddin Kuchi and Malik Izzuddin Kabir Khan Ayazi. They assembled from different parts of the country at the gate of Delhi,<sup>47</sup> made war against Sultana Raziya and enmities were carried on for a long time. Raziya was not perturbed by this grim situation. She crushed the insurgents with courage and fortitude. The noble who extended support and stood for Raziya's cause was Malik Nusrat-ud-din Taysi, the governor of Awadh.<sup>48</sup> He along with his contingents marched towards Delhi. But after he had crossed the Ganges, the hostile *maliks* who were besieging Delhi marched towards his camp and took him captive.<sup>49</sup> He appears to have been suffering from a disease when he had received the Sultan's command and so succumbed to the illness and died in captivity.<sup>50</sup> Thus Taysi was prevented to provide any military succour to Raziya.<sup>51</sup> There is no evidence to indicate that he was killed. Turkish slave officers did not kill each other till Balban reverted their policy, and Taysi had been a slave of Muizuddin .

Raziya was very brave and enthusiastic and became more assertive and confident in times of crisis. She resolved to break the rebel coalition. She pitched her tent along with the army on the bank of river Yamuna to confront the nobles.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> These were Maliks Salari of Badaon, Kabir Khan of Multan, Kochi of Hansi, and Jani of Lahore.

<sup>46</sup> *Tabaqat-i- Nasiri*, Vol.I., p. 458; *Tarikh -i- Ferishta*, Vol. I., p. 68.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*; *Tarikh -i- Ferishta*, Vol. I., p. 68.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p.458; *Tabaqat-i- Nasiri*, Tr. Raverty, Vol.I., op. cit., pp. 639-40.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*; *Tarikh-i- Ferishta*, Vol.I., p.68.

<sup>52</sup> *Tabaqat-i- Nasiri*, Vol.I., Tr. Raverty, op. cit., p. 640.

Several skirmishes took place but there was no positive result.<sup>53</sup> Finally it was the treacherous act of Malik Izzuddin Mohammad Salari and Malik Kabir Khan which brought situation in favour of Raziya.<sup>54</sup> These two nobles who were the pillars of the opponent group secretly joined Raziya's camp and hatched a conspiracy<sup>55</sup> with the Sultan against the seditious nobles. Malik Jani was killed near a village called Payal and his head was brought to Delhi,<sup>56</sup> where as Malik Koochi and his brother Fakhruddin were taken into captivity and finally put to death.<sup>57</sup> Nizamul Mulk the arch rival of Raziya took shelter in the Sirmur hills, where he met an unheroic death.<sup>58</sup>

Thus Razia prevented the growth of a dangerous constitutional precedent, that of allowing the provincial officers a predominant say in the ruler's appointment.

The above events boosted the prestige of Raziya and provincial governors submitted to her authority. They agreed to pay annual tribute. Her path was smoothened not only by providence but by her calm endurance, valour and tact. Now she turned to consolidate her position by being particular about every minute details of administration.

Having thus vindicated her accession she set about reorganizing the state departments. In this respect her first task was to appoint nobles of confidence so that and in times of crisis, she could depend on their loyalty and support. Thus Malik Kabir Ikhtiyaruddin Aitikin was assigned the province of Badaun.<sup>59</sup> He later occupied the post of *Amir-i- Hajib*.<sup>60</sup> Malik Izzuddin Kabir Khan was entrusted the province of Lahore<sup>61</sup> where as Hindu Khan was appointed as the governor of Uchch<sup>62</sup>, Malik Tayasi, as the governor of Awadh.<sup>63</sup> Khwaja Muhazzabuddin was conferred the title of Nizam-ul-Mulk and was entrusted the office of *wazir*.<sup>64</sup> Some of the higher posts were given to non Turkish Muslims.

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<sup>53</sup> *Tabaqat-i- Nasiri*, Vol. I., op. cit., p.461.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.458-459.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> *Tabaqat-i- Nasiri*, Vol. I., p. 459 and Vol. II, P. 22; *Tarikh-i- Ferishta*, Vol.I., p. 68.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 455.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> *Tarikh-i- Ferishta*, Vol. I., p.68; *Tabaqat-i- Nasiri*, Vol. I., p. 459.

<sup>62</sup> *Some Aspects of Religion and Politics in India During the Thirteenth Century*, op. cit., p.136.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> *Tabaqat-i- Nasiri*, Vol. I., p.459; *Tarikh-i Ferishta*, Vol. I., p.68.

One such official was Jamaluddin Yakut, an Abyssinian who was appointed *Amir-i- Akhur* (master of horse).<sup>65</sup> Malik Saifuddin Aibak was appointed as *Naib-i- Lashkar* (Chief of the army), a new office created by her with the title of Qutlugh Khan.<sup>66</sup> After his demise Malik Qutbuddin Hasan Ghorī was entrusted with this office.<sup>67</sup>

Raziya while making official appointments, gave due significance to public opinion. She was concerned about the response of the masses in general to her actions and policies. She as an able administrator never turned her back to the nobles who stood by the Sultan. This attitude created the bond of loyalty and obedience of the nobles with the Sultan which was beneficial both to the Sultan and the State.

While making appointments, Raziya was meticulous to avoid the concentration of power in the hands of a particular section of nobility. This checked the formation of a faction in the imperial court towards their selfish ends. Raziya embarked upon the policy of enlisting and patronizing non Turkish nobles, who were used as one of the means to create a new force to serve her political ends. Jamaluddin Yaqut, the Abyssinian slave received special consideration for being a non Turk. He occupied the prestigious office of *Amir-i- Akhur* which according to tradition was held by Turkish nobles only. This decision invited staunch opposition of Turkish nobles who were being deprived of their privilege and rights by the Sultan. She adopted such policies to strengthen the administration. This attitude however, proved fatal for her regime.

The first and foremost campaign of Raziya to consolidate her administration was against Ranthambhor.<sup>68</sup> This region was a constant source of trouble since the days of Sultan Iltutmish, the Chauhans under the leadership of Vagabhatta, threw off the royal yoke and besieged the fort of Ranthambhor. Raziya dispatched Qutbuddin Hasan Ghorī, to confront the rebellious Rajputs.<sup>69</sup>

The royal army broke the siege and set free the Muslims imprisoned in the fort.<sup>70</sup> Apart from this nothing positive was achieved. And Vagabhatta's influence could not be checked by Raziya.<sup>71</sup> The prestige of Delhi Sultanate received a serious

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<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 460.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p.459.; *Tarikh-i- Ferishta*, Vol. I., p. 68.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> *Tabaqat-i- Nasiri*, Vol. I., op. cit., p.459; *Tarikh-i- Ferishta*, Vol. I., op. cit., p. 68.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 460.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*



setback. The Chauhans thereafter, extended their influence all across the whole of North-Eastern Rajputana. They also forged an alliance with the predatory Mewatis, commenced an aggressive guerilla war which they carried towards the end of Mahmud's reign, right into the core Delhi territory itself.

Isami observes that, the throne on which Raziya sat used to be separated from the courtiers and the public by a screen; also the arrangement was such that female guards stood next to her and then those related to her by ties of blood.<sup>72</sup>

This arrangement was found to be cumbersome and obstructive. Raziya abandoned her female attire and appeared in public with the *quba* (cloak) and the *kulah* (hat).<sup>73</sup> She appeared in public riding an elephant<sup>74</sup> and started transacting business like other male rulers of Delhi. The public Minhaj says, could clearly see her. Raziya's more direct and assertive role in the administration and the appointment of non Turks to important posts created animosity amongst the Turkish nobles who began conspiracies for overthrow.<sup>75</sup>

Raziya presided over the proceedings of the court and dispensed justice in the most impartial manner.<sup>76</sup> At this juncture Raziya elevated Jamaluddin Yakut, to the office of *Amir-i-Akhur*,<sup>77</sup> primarily to curb the power of Turkish nobility.<sup>78</sup> Yakut advised, assisted and accompanied her on various occasions. Being a blind supporter of his benefactor and a well wisher he was considered to be quite close to her.<sup>79</sup>

Minhaj-us-Siraj, the contemporary historian speaks nothing about the intimacy between the two, while Isami casts a slur upon their relationship.<sup>80</sup> He says that she would require not only his presence but also assistance on the occasion of her riding, which in any case would not be part of the duties of the *Amir-i-Akhur* (master of the Stables).<sup>81</sup>

The later historians who based on the testimony of Isami and they delved the theme further and categorized it as 'Yakut and Raziya Affair'.<sup>82</sup> But this seems to be far from the truth. However when Yakut enjoyed the place of pride in the court, the

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<sup>72</sup> *Futuh-us-Salatin*, op. cit., p. 133.

<sup>73</sup> *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, Vol. I, p. 460; *Futuh-us-Salatin*, op. cit., p. 133.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, Vol. I, op. cit., pp. 459-460.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 460.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 461.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 460.

<sup>80</sup> *Futuh-us-Salatin*, Tr. Mahdi Husain, op. cit., pp. 253-55.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 253.

<sup>82</sup> *Political History and Institutions of the Early Turkish Empire of Delhi*, op. cit., pp. 193-94.

Turkish nobles grew jealous and schemed to bring Raziya's fall for now she asserted herself in administrative sphere.<sup>83</sup>

Despite no clear definition of power and privileges of the nobility their pretention to be king makers was clearly demonstrated in the elevation of Firoz and also formidable opposition that her own accession without their consent had provoked. As realized after her fall, it was not only to depose her but to ensure, by rendering the sovereign constitutionally unworthy no future encroachment was made on the predominant position of the nobility in the government.

Important campaign during the reign of Raziya was undertaken against Gwalior in March 1238 A.D.<sup>84</sup> The siege proved to be a long drawn out affair without any result. During the combat, Minhaj along with other prestigious personalities joined Raziya's camp. On 19<sup>th</sup> March 1230 A.D., It was through the mediation of Minhaj that positive negotiations could be forged between the two combating parties. The Sultan thereby assigned the post of *qazi* in Gwalior to Minhaj<sup>85</sup> who was also entrusted as the in charge of the Madarasa-i- Nasiriya at Delhi.<sup>86</sup>

Raziya was soon called upon to deal with Malik Izzuddin Tughril Tughan Khan<sup>87</sup> who defied the royal authority. Being an ambitious noble, he broke all his connections with the Sultanate and declared himself as an independent ruler at Lakhnauti. Raziya cowed to his desires and bestowed the royal *khilat*, *chhatr* and baton.<sup>88</sup> This recognition on the part of Raziya could not satisfy the lust of Tughril Khan for power, who sacked Tirhut and ran away with a large booty.<sup>89</sup> The Sultan being engrossed in a number of problems, could do nothing at that moment to restrict the activities of the ambitious *malik*.

Yet the few events that are recorded of her reign clearly show the vigour of her rule and her uncompromising determination to assert the royal authority. This is best seen in her relentless pursuit of the rebel governor of Lahore, Malik Izzuddin Kabir Khan<sup>90</sup> in 1239-40 A.D., who came in open conflict with the Sultan.<sup>91</sup> Escaping towards the frontier before the royal forces, led personally by the queen,

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<sup>83</sup> *Tabaqat-i- Nasiri*, Vol.I., op. cit., p. 460.

<sup>84</sup> *Tabaqat-i- Nasiri*, Tr. Raverty, Vol. I., op. cit., pp. 643-644.

<sup>85</sup> *Tabaqat-i- Nasiri*, Vol. I., op. cit., p. 460.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. II., p.13.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.14- 15.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. I., p. 460.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*

was at last confronted by the Mongols across the Chenab and was thus compelled to turn back and make his submission. Thus Raziya crushed his uprising with all her might and the erring nobles once again accepted her suzerainty.<sup>92</sup>

Now the province of Multan which was under the supervision of Malik Karakush Khan was entrusted to Malik Izzuddin Kabir Khan.<sup>93</sup> This arrangement clearly shows Raziya had forgiven the noble for his previous acts of omission and commission and to ensure peace in the Sultanate entrusted him the province of Multan. After making this arrangement Raziya returned to the capital.

Hardly she had reached Delhi and once again, she had to take a recourse to her arms in order to suppress the revolt of Altuniya, the governor of Tabarhinda, in April 1240 A.D.<sup>94</sup> Earlier he was a slave of Sultan Iltutmish, he was only the *sharabdari*<sup>95</sup> (the caretaker of the liquors ). After some time he gave him the office of *Sar-i-Chhatrdar*<sup>96</sup> (head of the canopy bearer), when Iltutmish died Raziya appointed him first to the *iqta* of Baran and later on to Tabarhinda<sup>97</sup> ( Bhatinda ). With elaborate arrangements she moved ahead to meet the rebel, but about half way the Turkish nobles in her army mutinied. Against these heavy odds Raziya could not stand for long and she was finally defeated. In this tumultuous conflict the Abyssinian favorite of Raziya, Yakut was killed,<sup>98</sup> and the Sultan was captured and sent to the fort of Tabarhinda.<sup>99</sup> Raziya's nobles and state officers secretly helped the rebel, Altunia.<sup>100</sup>

The army now returned to Delhi, where the Turkish officers elevated her brother, prince Bahram Shah, a son of late Sultan Iltutmish in Ramzan 687 A.H. / April 1240 A.D.<sup>101</sup> They distributed the fruits of victory amongst themselves by occupying offices of importance, ignoring completely the services and sacrifices of Altuniya , who was shocked at such treatment, as he expected a reward for his rebellion.

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<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. II., p. 20.

<sup>94</sup> *Tabaqat-i- Nasiri*, Vol. I., op. cit., p. 460; *Tarikh-i- Ferishta*, Vol. I., op. cit., p. 68.

<sup>95</sup> *Tabaqat-i- Nasiri*, Tr. Raverty, Vol. II, op. cit., p. 748.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>98</sup> *Tabaqat-i- Nasiri*, Vol. II., op. cit., p. 23; *Tarikh-i- Ferishta*, Vol. I., op. cit., p. 68.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. I. p. 461; *Tarikh-i- Ferishta*, Vol.I., op. cit., p. 68.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 460.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 462- 63; *Tarikh-i- Ferishta*, Vol. I. op. cit., p. 68.

Capitalizing on the situation, Raziya consoled the shocked and grieved Altunia who offered to marry her.<sup>102</sup> This proposal of marriage was accepted by Raziya, which was purely political move and the only way to retrieve her past lost position which might ensure the revival of her prestige with Altuniya. Now she became more confident and aggressive. For Altuniya also this matrimonial alliance was an opportunity to avenge his insult at the hands of the nobles. Thus he freed Raziya from the fort of Tabarhinda, married her and started preparations to regain his position.

Though Malik Izzuddin Mohammad Salari and Malik Qaraqash joined Raziya and Altuniya,<sup>103</sup> the conspirators at Delhi lost no time in placing Muizzuddin Bahram on the throne. This time the nobles bargaining for the crown Bahram were to appoint Malik Ikhtiyaruddin Aitigin, the organizer of victory against Raziya, as the *Naib-i-Mamlakat* and all power was to be given to him through a written proclamation.<sup>104</sup> Aitigin was an ambitious man who assumed some of the royal prerogatives- kept an elephant and arranged for playing the *naubat* at his gate.<sup>105</sup> To strengthen his position further he married the divorced sister of the Sultan.<sup>106</sup>

When the *maliks* and *amirs* who had betrayed Raziya returned to Delhi, they paid public homage to the new ruler. Very soon the new deputy Aitigin together with the *wazir* Nizam-ul-Mulk, Khwaja Muhazzabuddin Muhammad Iwaz and the *mustaufi* took over the control of state affairs. Soon this intrusion in sovereign affairs began to irk the new Sultan, especially after his marriage to the divorced sister of the Sultan. The deputy assumed the prerogatives of royalty to which he had no right. He indulged in opulent living and became autocratic until Muizzuddin Bahram sought means of getting rid of him. At last, within two months, the Sultan ordered a discourse to be delivered at the palace and on its termination, he sent two Turks who were trained as *Fidai* or assassins and who in front of the dais in the audience hall, stabbed Aitigin to death and seriously wounded the *wazir*. It was said that Aitigin deserved his fate<sup>107</sup> as he had incited Altunia to revolt against Raziya.

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<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 462.

<sup>103</sup> *Tabaqat-i- Nasiri*, Vol. I., op. cit., p. 462 .

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. II., op. cit., p. 23.

The people of Delhi thought that Raziya is safe and silent in Altuniya's hand. But she along with Altuniya collected an army of Khokhars, Jats and Rajputs.<sup>108</sup> He also won over to his side some Turkish nobles who were not satisfied from the side of the Sultan like Malik Qaraqash and Izzuddin Muhammad Salari,<sup>109</sup> and again fought for the cause of Raziya, and they marched towards Delhi in the month of September.- October 1240 A.D. Sultan Muizzuddin Bahram matched against them with an army. The two armies met near Delhi, an obstinate conflict ensued in which Raziya and Altuniya were defeated on 14<sup>th</sup> oct. 1240 and driven back. When they reached Kaithal all their soldiers deserted them and they fell into the hands of the *zamindars* and were massacred on the same day.<sup>110</sup>

Ibn Battuta gives the following description of Raziya's death that when she was defeated and driven back to Kaithal, she was hungry and overcome by fatigue; she asked for food to a man who was busy in cultivation. He gave her a piece of bread and she fell asleep. She was dressed like a man. While she was asleep the peasant's eye fell upon her *quba*, studded with gold and pearls. Realizing that she is a woman, he killed her stripped off her valuables, drove away her horse and buried her corpse in his field.<sup>111</sup> And then carried some of her garments to market for sale. But the dealer suspected him and took him before the *shihna* (magistrate). The cultivator acceded to his role in the crime and admitted his guilt. They exhumed Raziya's body from the field, washed it and after wrapping in a shroud, buried it again at the same place. A small shrine was erected over her grave which is visited by pilgrims and is considered a place of sanctity. It is situated at the bank of Jamuna.<sup>112</sup>

Minhaj describes the end of Raziya and Altuniya as follows: " In the month of Rabi I, 638 A.H. / sep- oct 1240 A.D. , Sultan Bahram marched against them with an army from Delhi, and Raziya and Altuniya were defeated and driven back. When they reached Kaithal, all their soldiers deserted them and they fell into the hands of the Hindus and were martyred. They were defeated on 24 Rabi, I, 638 A.H. / 14 October 1240 A.D. and Raziya was martyred on the following day."<sup>113</sup>

<sup>108</sup> *A Comprehensive History of India*, op. cit., p. 242; *Tarikh-i- Ferishta*, Vol. I., op. cit., p. 68. But he has not written about Rajputs.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>110</sup> *A Comprehensive History of India*, op. cit., p. 242.

<sup>111</sup> *The Rehla of Ibn Battuta*, Tr. Mahdi Husain, op. cit., p. 35.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>113</sup> Cf. Nizami K.A., *A Comprehensive History of India*, op. cit., p. 242.

While Ferishta, says that Sultan Bahram, the new king sent Malik Izzuddin Balban, son in law of the late Sultan Iltutmish, with his forces to oppose the queen. The two armies met near Delhi, an obstinate conflict ensued, in which the Sultan was defeated and fled to Bhatinda. After sometime, she assembled her scattered forces and was in a condition to make another bold effort for the crown, and advanced towards Delhi. Malik Izzuddin Balban, who was again sent to oppose her, gave the Sultan's army a second defeat at Kaithal, on the 4<sup>th</sup> Rabi I, 637 A.H. / Oct. 24, 1239 A.D., she and her husband were seized by the *zamindars* in their flight, and were both put to death on the 25<sup>th</sup> of the same month.<sup>114</sup>

Here we have gathered the evidences of Ibn Battuta, Minhaj and Ferishta which reveals that her flight from the imperial court was fatal in nature and she died in anonymity and it was much later that a tomb was erected. According to some historians, it is at Kaithal while others say that it lies in Delhi. At last, it has been taken up in detail, in the same chapter.

### **Religious Anarchy:**

One of the most significant events of Raziya's reign, witnessed an incident of religious anarchy which was successfully quelled. The so called Kiramitha<sup>115</sup> (a secret sect of Islam having faith in the theory of bloodshed of Sunnis) and Mulahidah<sup>116</sup> (unreligious people) were incited by Nuruddin (Nur), a Turk to gain their objectives.<sup>117</sup> They gathered in Delhi from all parts of Hindustan, such as Gujarat, Sindh, Multan and around the suburbs of the capital and from the places on the banks of Jamuna and Ganga. When Nur preached, the people used to gather around him. He incited the mind of the common people against the Sunnis. He began to condemn the Hanafi and Shafi' doctrines and called the Sunni ulama *nasibi* and *murji*<sup>118</sup> and whipped up the populace into a frenzy of rage against the ecclesiastic establishment.

Soon after Raziya's accession, they incited these sects to revolt against the new Sovereign. A secret pact of loyalty was included between members of these sects and Nur Turk. Nur Turk enjoyed complete support of blood and in glaring incident in

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<sup>114</sup> *Tarikh-i- Ferishta*, Tr. John Briggs, *History of the Mahomedan Power in India*, Vol. I., S. Dev., Calcutta, Reprint, 1908, pp. 123-24.

<sup>115</sup> *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, Vol. I., op. cit., p. 461.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>118</sup> *A Comprehensive History of India*, op. cit., p. 242.

the name of religion on Friday 5<sup>th</sup> March 1236 A.D.,<sup>119</sup> a horde of about 1000<sup>120</sup> such armed heretics fell like white hawks upon the unguarded innocent people who had gathered at Jami Masjid in Delhi<sup>121</sup> to offer congregational prayer. One sect of heretics entered from the northern gate of the Jami Masjid while the other came through Muizzi College gate mercilessly massacring the devotees.<sup>122</sup>

Nasiruddin Aitamar Balarami and Amir Imam Nasir showed tact and courage by collecting a group of people armed them with bows and spears to combat the heretics.<sup>123</sup> The act of theirs infused courage and strength amongst the ones inside the mosque, who too pelted stones and bricks at the heretic, the latter now ran in panic for shelter but most of them were trampled or slain.<sup>124</sup>

In order to ascertain, whether the uprising was political or religious in character, we have to first reconsider the character of Nur Turk, the leader of the heretics. The earlier account of Minhaj was however contradicted by Sheikh Nizamuddin Auliya during one of his mystic gatherings.<sup>125</sup> He said that “Maulana Nur Turk was purer than rain water.” Since he condemned the *ulema* of the day for their materialistic pursuits. Minhaj and others of his type felt bitterly hostile towards him. May be this rising of Karamithians in Delhi had nothing to do with Maulana Nur Turk, referred to by Sheikh Nizamuddin Auliya.<sup>126</sup>

In spite of the uprising, the popularity of the Delhi Sultanate after her accession remained undisputed and law and order was established by the active participation of the masses in co-ordination with the administration. Seeing these things it appears that this uprising was not undertaken to create political upheaval during the reign of Raziya.

### **Raziya's Administration:**

Raziya ruled successfully for three and a half years. She combated intrigues adroitly, displayed a remarkable insight into military tactics, resourcefully implemented her independent decisions and diplomatically reconciled the recalcitrant

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<sup>119</sup> *Tabaqat-i- Nasiri*, Vol. I., op. cit., p. 461.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>125</sup> *A Comprehensive History of India*, op. cit., p. 243.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*

*iqta* holders. Her chief merit was her ability to rise above the prejudices of her age and times. According to Minhaj, “Raziya was the ablest of the successors of Iltutmish.” This statement can hardly be denied.

By her talent and accomplishments she had impressed her father, Iltutmish to such an extent that after the death of his eldest son, Prince Nasiruddin Mahmud in 1229 A.D., he had declared Raziya as his successor in preference to his sons, namely Rukunuddin Firoz and Muizuddin Bahram. The claim of Raziya to the throne was based on her competence and her experience in the management of the administration of the Sultanate. Iltutmish had made all efforts to give her proper training in matters of administration and equip her well, for the task of which he assigned to her. In 1231 A.D., when Iltutmish had left the capital on an expedition against Gwalior, he put the charge of administration upon Raziya and she managed the affairs of the State admirably.<sup>127</sup>

Very soon after her accession Raziya realized that *Purdah* was an impediment for the direct and effective control of administrative affairs. So she discarded it, she also discovered that the ambition of the Turkish nobles was a serious obstacle to the maintenance of law and order and set about to create a nobility of non-Turks as a counter poise against the Turks.

Raziya held an open court, listened to grievances of her subjects and exercised general supervision over the work of every department. She impressed everybody by her ability, love of justice, recognition of merit and capacity for hard work. She exhibited skill and competence in handling day to day administration. She was well versed in the art of warfare. She led contingents of troops to battlefield and exhibited signs of valour and skill.

Realizing the significance of well organized army, she became very particular in appointing men of courage in the army. The office of *Naib-i-Lashkar* in the army received prominence during her time but after her death it lost its significance. It was the *Naib-i-Lashkar*, who led the contingents with the same zeal, courage and enthusiasm in the absence of the Sultan. Raziya was very particular about the welfare of the soldiers. She often gave liberal gifts to the soldiers, in order to keep them happy

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<sup>127</sup> *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, Vol. I., op. cit., pp. 637-38.



and contented.<sup>128</sup> Malik Saifuddin and after his demise, Qutubuddin Hasan Ghorî occupied the office of *Naib-i- Lashkar* and carried out their duties with perfection.<sup>129</sup>

In a casual reference to her diplomatic relations with Khwarazmian governors of Ghazni, Malik Hasan Qarlugh,<sup>130</sup> we can discern in Raziya's character, an amount of foresight and statesmanship, rare in those days of reckless adventuring. It appears, that some sort of alliance existed between Ilutmish and Qarlugh when the latter was still holding out against the Mongols in Ghazni and their combined forces are said to have been driven out. Qarlugh was finally dispossessed of his territory in 636 A.H. /1238 A.D.<sup>131</sup> and was thus compelled to seek refuge in the Western provinces of the Delhi Sultanate.

The accession of a talented and strong willed ruler in the person of Raziya and Qarlugh's own urgent need led him to renew his attempt at converting the earlier friendship into a full political and military alliance, and he accordingly sent his son to persuade the Delhi government to agree to his proposals, probably to negotiate some sort of military alliance.

This Raziya, however was not prepared to do. With the fate of the Khwarizmi empire and numerous other smaller states before her eyes, the growing power of the hostile Hindu princes in India and the precarious position of the sovereign among her powerful and ambitious courtiers, she was no fool to count the enmity of the invincible Mongols, much less hope to defeat them.

Raziya with the courtesy and tact of her father, she received the Qarlugh prince with honour and assigned the revenues of Baran for his expenses.<sup>132</sup> Her firm disinclination to entertain the proposal must have been made plain, for he left soon without any formality and rejoined his father, who now left with no alternative, commenced operations to carve out a principality for himself in Sindh. Thus she declined to form a coalition against the Mongols,<sup>133</sup> which was a sound political decision to save the Sultanate from Mongol invasions and she remained friendly with them.

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<sup>128</sup> *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, Tr. Raverty, Vol. I, op. cit., p. 643.

<sup>129</sup> Day U.N., *The Government of the Sultanate*, Kumar Brothers, New Delhi, 1972, p. 148.

<sup>130</sup> *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, Vol. II., op. cit., pp. 162- 163.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 243-244.

Minhaj-us- Siraj admiringly observes that “From Lakhnauti to Debal all *maliks* and *amirs* submitted to her authority.”<sup>134</sup>

During the three and a half years of Raziya’s reign, Delhi and its citizens had supported her unhesitatingly. The *amirs* and *maliks*, inspite of their concerted effort to remove her, never dared to storm the royal Palace or seize her person in the capital. They must have been afraid of the citizens of Delhi who had placed her on the throne, and would have opposed her removal by the *amirs* with all their might.

Raziya had a comparatively peaceful time and carried on the administration of her vast kingdom with great skill and wisdom. She realized that it was necessary for the welfare of the country to curb the power of the Turkish nobles.

By all accounts Raziya vindicated her father’s faith in her. She was a very astute ruler. The army and the people of Delhi were solidly behind the Sultan. She needed all the support in order to rule. She could even get back with many of her most powerful governors who were in revolt against her. It was in talking to them that Raziya gave evidence of her immense sagacity. On the military front, she defeated one of their principal leaders *wazir* Muhammad Junaidi so convincingly that he retired from active politics. Soon she was successful in winning over most of the remaining nobles to her side.

Raziya had reportedly devoted her life for the cause of her empire and to her subjects. There is no record that she made any attempt to remain aloof from her subjects, rather it appears that she preferred to mingle among them.

Raziya dispensed justice without discrimination along with the *qazis* and *muftis*, who attended the audience hall.<sup>135</sup> She held a court every week in which the earlier arrangement of female guards, and the screen was done away with, and transacted state business in the manner of kings. She used to hold court, and the wheels of Justice functioned in the usual manner.

However, having set up loyal and reliable administrative machinery, Raziya thought of having a direct control of affairs. She then turned to bring some revolutionary changes in her mode of living thereby setting a new pattern. A direct

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<sup>134</sup> *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, Vol. I., op. cit., p. 459.

<sup>135</sup> Husain Wahed, *Administration of Justice During the Muslim Rule in India*, Calcutta University, Calcutta, 1934, p.22.

control was not possible if she observed *purdah* and remained in seclusion, so she became the martyr of *purdah*.<sup>136</sup>

### **Coinage under Raziya :**

The Sultans of Delhi coined in gold, silver, copper and a mixture of silver and copper. The Ghaznavide kings introduced in India the thin gold and silver pieces characteristic of the Mohammadan issues current in Central Asia, but these were quickly superseded by thicker coins modeled on the native currency. The coins in general use were small, dumpy pieces of mixed metal.<sup>137</sup>

Significant work has been done on the coinage system of the rulers of the country by Nelson Wright's *Catalogue of the Coins in the Indian Museum Calcutta*, Stanley Lane-Poole's *The Coins of the Sultans of Delhi in the British Museum*, Danish Moin's *Coins of the Delhi Sultans* etc. They also furnish information on Raziya's coinage.

Here I have taken the key features of Raziya's coinage which attract the attention of the historians like -

- A) Nusrat Type ( Figure I )
- B) Raziaudduniya Type ( Figure- II )
- C) Horsemen Type ( Figure- III )
- D) Legend type ( Figure- IV )

As far as the coinage of Raziya's period is concerned, it is very significant to know about, what type of coins she issued, her title, whether it was in her name with the Sultan Iltutmish or not, and later on she issued the coins bearing her independent name, and also it shows the influence of Caliphate on Delhi Sultanate since the time of Sultan Iltutmish, who got an investiture from the Caliph of Baghdad.

The name which she officially assumed and in which she is generally referred to in the chronicles, as well as in her coins was *Sultan Razat- al- Dunya wal- Din bint al- Sultan*.<sup>138</sup> She however appears to have had another title, *Sultan Jalalat- al- Dunya*

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<sup>136</sup> *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, Vol. I, op. cit., p. 460.

<sup>137</sup> Whitehead R.B., *The Catalogue of the Collection of Coins Illustrative of the History of the Rulers of Delhi Upto 1858 A.D.*, Munshiram Manoharlal, New Delhi, Reprint, 1990, p. 11.

<sup>138</sup> Lane- Poole Stanley, *The Coins of the Sultans of Delhi in the British Museum*, London, 1884, pp. 18-19; Moin Danish, *Coins of the Delhi Sultans*, IIRNS Publication, Nasik, ( Maharashtra ) , First Published, 1999, p. 14.

*wal – Din*,<sup>139</sup> She too continued the coin types of Iltutmish and issued coins in silver, bullion and copper. Raziya's coinage, too, seems allude to her emancipation. Initially coins struck at Delhi reflected the vulnerability of her regime, since they bore either her father's name alone or proclaimed Iltutmish as *Sultan al Azam* with Raziya herself given the subordinate title of *Sultan al Muazzam*. But the style changed, possibly again in 635 A.H. / 1237-38 A.D., when Raziya alone was named on the coinage.<sup>140</sup> Delhi and Lakhnauti were the chief mint names as seen on the coins of Raziya.



Figure- I Fi ahad / Nusrat type

In the beginning of her reign, she issued her silver coins in the name of her father, (Figure- I) with an additional word *Nusrat* (Assistant). This indicates that her sultanate was far from secure, and she was ruling in the name of her father to have support of the nobles and her subjects.



Figure- II Fi ahad / Raziaudduniya type

<sup>139</sup> Wright Nelson, *Catalogue of the Coins in the Indian Museum Calcutta*, Vol. II, Published for the trustees of the Indian Museum Oxford- at the Clarendon press, 1907, p. 26, No. 93.

<sup>140</sup> Wright Nelson, *The Coinage and Metrology of the Sultans of Delhi*, Munshiram Manoharlal, Delhi, 1974, No. 161, 161 A, p. 40.

Later she also issued coins bearing her own name *Raziaudduniya waddin* (Figure- II ) along with the name of Abbasid Caliph Al- Mustansir.<sup>141</sup> She adopted the title of *Nusrat Amir-ul- momenin* (helper of commander of faithful, i. e. Caliph). The word *Nusrat* is a synonym for *Nasir* , but *Nusrat* is used as the female gender. The weight of her silver *tanka* varied from 9.7 to 10.5 gm.<sup>142</sup>



Figure- III Legend / horseman

Her bullion coins are of Arabic legend/ horseman type (Figure- III), along with Devanagari legend. Copper coins of Raziya were issued in bull / Arabic legend type.



Figure- IV Bull / legend

Her predecessors had not issued the bull / legend type in copper (Figure- IV). These copper coins, like the bullion coins, were struck at a weight of about 3.5 gm. Some smaller denomination coins of about 2.2 gm. were also issued.<sup>143</sup>

<sup>141</sup> *The Coinage and Metrology of the Sultans of Delhi*, op. cit., p. 40.

<sup>142</sup> *Coins of the Delhi Sultans*, op. cit., p. 14.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*

She derived her title to the throne from Iltutmish, who in his turn based it on the Caliph's investiture. She continued in her coins and also in the *Khutba* to use the name of the reigning Caliph, although she does not appear to have been specially invested by the latter. This was her first venture in the realm of numismatics.

### **Personality of Raziya:**

Raziya Sultan possessed great qualities which befit a Princess, although she was a Prince more than Princess. And those who scrutinized her work most critically never found any fault in her except that she was a woman. She was the only queen of India had ever known, - a queen whose heroic qualities, justice, patronage of learning and concern for the welfare of her subjects evoked warm attributes from every writer of history. Indeed, Raziya was an extremely talented and intelligent lady.<sup>144</sup> She seems to have taken keen interest in education also. She was fond of music and gave musicians royal patronage. She herself composed verses under the no de'plume of *Shirin*.<sup>145</sup> She recited the Quran and offered prayers in a proper manner.<sup>146</sup> She had a fair knowledge of several other Sciences and possessed all the qualities necessary for a wise ruler. She had, moreover given ample proof of her dauntless courage by accompanying her father in several campaigns. Ferishta remarks that the men of discernment could find no defect in her, except that she was created in the form of a woman.

Thus being a woman of intellectual aptitude she stood for the encouragement of education during her regime. She patronized men of letters.<sup>147</sup> Minhaj was entrusted the task of supervision of Madarsa-i-Nasiriya<sup>148</sup> which became a centre of learning in her region. She established schools, academics, centre of research, and public libraries that included the works of ancient philosopher along with the Quran and the traditions of Muhammad. Hindu works in the sciences, philosophy, astronomy and literature were reportedly studied in schools and colleges which were in flourishing state during her reign. The college which was located at Delhi and was so rich and magnificent,

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<sup>144</sup> *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, Vol. I., op. cit., p. 457.

<sup>145</sup> Shushtery A.M.A., *Outlines of Islamic culture*, Vol. II., Bangalore press, Bangalore city, 1938, p. 771.

<sup>146</sup> *Tarikh-i-Ferishta*, Vol. I., op. cit., P. 68.

<sup>147</sup> *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, Vol. I., op. cit., p. 460..

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*

that it was once attacked by the Karamathians who were under the impression that it was the Jama Masjid.

The Delhi Sultanate was beset with numerous problems when Raziya took up the reign of the state. Through her tact and prescience, she overcame her difficulties and controlled the situation. She succeeded in establishing peace, and order in the Sultanate.

Minhaj-us-Siraj, who was a distinguished *alim* remarks that “Raziya was endowed with all the admirable attributes and qualifications necessary for Kings; but as she did not attain the destiny, in her creation, of being computed among men of what advantage were all these excellent qualifications to her.”<sup>149</sup>

### **Raziya's Fall:**

There was a section of the people however, which could not bear the idea of a woman being the head of the State. Others felt unhappy because she did not allow them as much latitude as they desired. Her gender in no way was an impediment to her success.<sup>150</sup> Raziya achieved her objectives because of her determination and courage. It is true in certain spheres, that she could not achieve much in her campaigns against Gwalior and Ranthambhor. But for these failures, circumstances were also responsible to a great extent and Raziya cannot solely be blamed.

The aggressive attitude which she adopted towards the nobility was largely responsible for her fall. She dealt with the elite group of the court strictly, and tried to counter balance the power of the Turkish nobles by encouraging non Turkish nobles. This hostile policy strained the relationship between the Sultan and nobility. The latter's co-operation was essential in running the administration, but in order to keep themselves as an active force they conspired to overthrow the regime of the Sultan. Despite of the best efforts ultimately she fell into their trap.

Others still, started a whispering campaign against her because she had shown some favour to Jamaluddin Yakut. They went to the length of suggesting that they might soon marry.<sup>151</sup> These were some Ismailies in Delhi who had failed in their attempt at seizing power by force in the days of her father. They made another attempt against Raziya, but were summoned to court because she suspected them preparing

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<sup>149</sup> *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, Tr. Raverty, Vol. I., op. cit., p. 638.

<sup>150</sup> *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, Vol. I., op. cit., p. 458.

<sup>151</sup> Panday A.B., *Early Medieval India*, Central Book Depot, Allahabad, 1965, pp. 58-59.

for rebellion.<sup>152</sup> During the last days of Raziya, when she was away on the Lahore campaign, they (Turkish nobles) planned a conspiracy.

Minhaj does not give us the details, Raziya had put him in charge of the Nasiriya college, so the conspirators would not have taken him into their confidence. Still what he tells us is significant:- “As the minds of the Turkish *amirs*, who were *shamsi* slaves, were alienated from Sultan Raziya owing to the high status of Jamaluddin Yakut, an Abyssinian and there was a firm bond of affection and friendship between Aitigin, the *Amir-i-Hajib* and Altuniya, the governor of Bhatinda. Aitigin informed Altunia of the change. Altunia secretly began to lay the foundations of rebellion at Tabarhinda and removed his head from the yoke of obedience to the Sultan”.<sup>153</sup>

In other words, while Raziya was away, Aitigin informed Altunia that in case he rebelled, Aitigin would see the rest. But would he go half and half with his co-conspirators? The future was to reveal that there is no honour among such things.

The impression that there was something shady in her preference for Jamaluddin Yakut is absolutely baseless.<sup>154</sup> What antagonized the Turkish *maliks* and *amirs* against her were the dangers involved in her policy towards them, although reliance cannot be placed on the bachelor Isami's misogynist approach in dealing with Raziya's character.<sup>155</sup>

Raziya's marriage with Altuniya was her last attempt to revive her lost prestige, but she failed miserably. The intriguing nobles and provincial governors of the far flung provinces of the Sultanate were reluctant to accept her authority and resolved to overthrow her regime. In this tussle Raziya lost, for it was beyond her faculties to control them.

It is surprising that Raziya did not find a place in the list of Sultans which was prepared by the orders of Sultan Firuzshah Tughluq.<sup>156</sup> This omission by Sultan Firuzshah in no way undermines her contribution in stabilizing the Turkish Empire in India. Raziya stands as the only example of women, who wielded royal power during the Sultanate period.<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> *Early Medieval India*, op. cit., pp. 58-59.

<sup>153</sup> *A Comprehensive History of India*, op. cit., pp. 241- 42.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 243-44.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>156</sup> Banerji J. M., *History of Firuzshah Tughluq*, op. cit., pp.73-74.

<sup>157</sup> Tripathi R.P., *Some Aspects of Muslim Administration*, Central Book Depot, Allahabad, 1959, p.109.



Her greatest fault according to Isami which the nobles could find, and which they later pointed out as proof to her unfitness and reason for consequent removal, was her disregard of all conventions in throwing up the veil and thereby creating public suspicion.

### **Conclusion:**

Raziya occupies a remarkable place among the Thirteenth Century Turkish rulers of India. Among the successors of Iltutmish, she was the ablest and the most worthy to the office of the sovereign. She made considerable amends for the disorders of the reign of Ruknuddin and despite fierce opposition, consolidated her position by her tact and ability.

If she had been born a man she would have greater success, because in that case there would neither be an opposition from the side of *wazir* and other nobles nor could there be the scope for conspiracy on ground of suspected intimacy with Yakut. She had reduced the power of the Turks and was carefully building up an alternative group but her reign was suddenly cut short. Her success therefore was only partial up to 1238. She succeeded almost in every undertaking but since 1239, opposition began to gain momentum and she failed to overcome it.

Various factors contributed to her failure. Medieval historians ascribe it principally to her gender. But an equally or more important reason was the selfishness and strength of the nobility. The Sultans of those days could never count on the support of the masses who regarded them as aliens and followers of a different faith.

Raziya was able to strengthen her hands by roping in the support of the people of Delhi. There were a number of sons of Iltutmish, still living and they could be used as pawns by self seeking nobles, for acquiring more and more power, without incurring the odium of supplanting the dynasty of their master. Besides the control of the centre over the local units was still far from complete. The Turkish state was still in its infancy, and resistance by the Hindus was persistent and powerful. The Sultans had therefore, to allow wide military and financial powers to their governors. If a number of them combined against the central authority, they often became too powerful for the Sultan. There was a lot of confusion and disorder, because of the above mentioned factors till the accession of Balban and the power of the Sultan of the intervening period was generally weak.

## Her Grave:

Raziya's grave lies among the narrow lanes of old Delhi, a dilapidated black marble tomb standing some distance, in the courtyard in *Babul-i- khana* inside Turkman gate of the city of Shahjahanabad<sup>158</sup> ( now called old Delhi ). Crumbling and covered by dust and grime, the grave has clearly seen the ravages of time. The grave is surrounded on all sides by unattractive residential buildings. Some of the Muslim residents of the neighborhood have turned a part of the tomb into a mosque where prayers are conducted five times a day.

It was considered to be her burial place until the archaeological Survey of India, very recently declared it to be tomb of a Sufi saint.<sup>159</sup>

However there is also a claim that the tomb of Raziya is situated at Kaithal, Haryana. The tomb lies in the North Western suburbs of the city where a few years back, a jail was erected by the present administration.

Such was the glorious reign of Sultan Raziya, which has not yet been dealt properly so that even a lay person can understand her achievement that she made in Indian history.

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<sup>158</sup> Brijbhushan Jamila, *Sultan Raziya- Her Life and Times*, op. cit., p.21.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*

## Chapter II

### The Influence of Royal Harem on the Imperial Politics

The oriental rulers had large *harem* which was a significant segment of royal household. Large expenses were incurred to maintain luxury in these quarters. The principal wives had each a house, maiden, guards and servants. The advent of Turks instilled their culture in the country. Turkish women enjoyed considerable freedom and they were treated at par with men, in all matters pertaining to peace or war. They exercised influence, and were consulted in important affairs.

The *harem* of the Sultans comprised the mother of the Sultan, his wives, sisters and daughters, concubines and slave girls. Some of them were daughters of important nobles or chiefs. Those legally wedded were few; the number of others was often very large. Historians have used two very significant phrases- *dar nikah awurd* (brought into the legal wedlock) and *dar harem awurd* (admitted to the *harem*) - in order to indicate the manner in which particular women were admitted into the seraglio.<sup>1</sup> But maintaining a large *harem* was cumbersome, personal jealousies and intrigues disturbed the atmosphere. Sultan Mahmud of Gujarat is exemplary in maintaining peaceful atmosphere in the seraglio,<sup>2</sup> according to his rules any lady who laughed at or derided the other, both were killed.<sup>3</sup>

This chapter intends to focus the most distinguished women of the royal *harem*. Some royal ladies enjoyed high prestige and were endowed high titles such as *Malika-i- Jahan*, *Makhduma-i- Jahan* etc. The prominent ladies who were attracted to politics during the period were Shah Turkan (wife of Sultan Iltutmish), *Malika-i- Jahan*, (wife of Sultan Jalaluddin Khalji), *Makhduma-i Jahan* and Khudavandzada (the mother and sister of Sultan Mohammad Bin Tughluq) respectively.

The main sources for the concerned chapter are *Tabaqat-i- Nasiri* of Minhaj-us Siraj, *Tarikh-i- Firozshahi* of Ziauddin Barani, *Rehla* of Ibn Battuta, *Tarikh-i- Ferishta* of Abdul Qasim Ferishta and *Tarikh-i- Firozshahi* of Shams Siraj Afif etc.

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<sup>1</sup> Nizami K. A., *Royalty in Medieval India*, Munshiram Manoharlal, New Delhi, First Published, 1997, p. 84.

<sup>2</sup> Sikandar Ibn Muhammad urf Manjhu Ibn Akbar, *Mirat-i- Sikandari*, eds. Misra S.C. and Rahman M.L., University of Baroda, Baroda, 1961, p. 152.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 293.

An interesting aspect of *harem* life of the Delhi Sultans was that, in order to strengthen their position, they established matrimonial relations with the royal family. Some significant examples are- daughter of Qutbuddin Aibak was married to Iltutmish; a daughter of Iltutmish was married to Balban; Altunia married Raziya; Balban gave one of his daughters in marriage to Nasiruddin Mahmud; a daughter of Malik Chajju was married to Kaiqubad; a daughter of Kaiqubad was married to Alauddin Khalji; a daughter of Sultan Jalaluddin Khalji was married to Alauddin Khalji; a daughter of Alauddin Khalji was married to Ghiyasuddin Tughluq; a daughter of Mubarak Khalji was married to Firozshah Tughluq and a daughter of Sultan Muhammad of the Syed dynasty was married to Mahmud Sharqi.<sup>4</sup>

It seems that the above matrimonial relations were diplomatic in character and were inspired by the desire to check their opponents by establishing chosen contacts with the ruling house. It also appears from the examples the Sultans of Delhi established matrimonial relation without making any discrimination of dynasty, caste and creed. The matrimonial relations of the Sultans before accession did not always remain cordial. But the ladies of the household enjoyed respectable position and were held in high esteem by the Sultans.

Iltutmish's death in 1236 was a signal for the nobles to initiate factional politics. His vigilance and political adroitness had as yet kept the nobles strictly under his control throughout his life time. During the three decades that intervene between his death and the accession of Balban the crown of Delhi passed through many vicissitudes. The nobles left no stone unturned in divesting the Sultan of all his authority and prestige. Every important noble sought to establish their own prestige on the throne, and thereby control the entire administrative machinery.

The women of the royal household enjoyed a privileged position and sometimes, they could be able to change the course of events, we therefore intend to analyze their role. The first lady in the Sultanate of Delhi, who is mentioned by contemporary historian was *Khudavanda-i Jahan* Shah Turkan. She was originally a slave girl of Turkish origin<sup>5</sup> purchased by Iltutmish. She rose to the status of chief queen of Sultan Iltutmish by dint of her beauty and qualities.<sup>6</sup> The subsequent

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<sup>4</sup> *Royalty in Medieval India*, op. cit., p. 85.

<sup>5</sup> *Tabaqat-i Nasiri*, Vol. I., op. cit., p. 454; *Tarikh-i Ferishta*, op. cit., pp. 67-68.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

appraisal demonstrates the power exercised by her. How she prevailed over the imperial court politics to satisfy her personal ambitions.

An ambitious lady, possessing intelligence and ability, she took over the reins of government in her own hands, after the passing away of her husband, because the new Sultan, her son Sultan Ruknuddin Firoz had become neglectful of his duties, owing to his over indulgence in pleasure.

She patronized men of letters and bestowed munificent generosity towards the men of learning and piety and endowments.<sup>7</sup> She won the support of the nobility, and it was with their active co operation that she succeeded in setting aside the will of Sultan Iltutmish and claimed the throne for her son Ruknuddin Firoz in place of Raziya Sultan.

Shah Turkan had ambitious and intriguing nature. She rose to prominence because of the incompetent and pleasure loving temperament of her son, Sultan Ruknuddin Firoz. The Sultan preferred a life of merry making with wine and women ignoring his responsibility in the affairs of the state. This led Shah Turkan to control the administration of the Sultanate. She enjoyed the support of the officers of the house and the Turkish officers of the capital.

All powers were concentrated in her hands,<sup>8</sup> to the extent that she issued royal *farmans* (royal mandates) in her own name.<sup>9</sup> She meted out her vicious treatment against the other wives, sons and daughters of the deceased husband. Out of sheer jealousy she started harassing the ladies of the royal household. On the pretext of personal grievances, she brought about the assassination of several co wives of Sultan Iltutmish<sup>10</sup> as she enjoyed the status of queen mother; she avenged being treated as base and inferior by her co wives.

The treasury was unduly spent to cater for the Sultan's pleasure. This vicious, petticrot rule produced the inevitable reaction and his own supporters now set about to make amends for their hasty action. But Shah Turkan wanted to keep the throne safe and secure for her son Ruknuddin Firoz. This brought her in conflict with another son of Sultan Iltutmish named Qutbuddin. He was a young prince having many talents and

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<sup>7</sup> *Tabaqat-i- Nasiri*, Vol. I., op. cit., p. 454; *Tarikh-i- Ferishta*, op. cit., pp. 67-68.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 455.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

merit. By the order of Shah Turkan and Ruknuddin Firoz, he was blinded and finally put to death.<sup>11</sup>

All these activities of Shah Turkan led to mutual distrust in the government. Rebellions broke out in different parts of the country.<sup>12</sup> The so called forty (*Turkan-i-chahalgani*) the prominent figure of the period felt that for preserving the dynasty and good name of their master Ruknuddin Firoz must be deposed. To make the matters worse the provincial governors such as Malik Ghiyasuddin Mohammad Shah, a son of Iltutmish rose in rebellion in Oudh<sup>13</sup> and plundered the treasure of Lakhnauti, which was being taken to Delhi. He also sacked and plundered several towns and created lawlessness. Malik Izzuddin Mohammad Salari, the *iqtadar* of Badaun,<sup>14</sup> also rebelled. The *iqtadar* of Multan, Malik Izzuddin Kabir Khan Ayaz and the *Iqtadar* of Hansi, Malik Saifuddin Kochi and the *iqtadar* of Lahore Malik Alauddin Jani, collectively rose against Firoz. It was a formidable combination of some of the most influential and powerful *maliks* of the empire. Firoz marched from Delhi in order to deal with them, but the imperial officers themselves were either afraid of the power of the rebels or not loyal to the king. Nizamul Mulk Junaidi, the *wazir* deserted the army at Kilugarhi and fled to Koil, and from there went to join Malik Jani and Kochi.<sup>15</sup> The rebellion of the *maliks and amirs* spread like a wild fire. Ruknuddin Firoz led an army towards Kohram. At this time the Turkish *amirs* and slaves of the household, who formed the core centre of the army of the Sultan, further complicated the situation by intriguing with the many of *Tazik* (non Turk) officers<sup>16</sup> in the neighbour hoods of Mansurpur and Tarain.

Rebellions and disorders in the empire encouraged Raziya also to take advantage. Her relations with Shah Turkan were far from cordial. Shah Turkan wanted to secure her position therefore she challenged Raziya. The generosity of the Sultan<sup>17</sup> perhaps had kept the people of the capital in check so long, but during his absence from the capital Shah Turkan quarreled with Raziya. A rebellion broke out in the city in favour of Raziya . She deepend the crisis by inciting the masses of Delhi against the oppressive measures of Shah Turkan. The Sultan was forced to return to

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<sup>11</sup> *Tabaqat-i- Nasiri*, Vol. I., op. cit., p. 455.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 454

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p.456.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 458.

the capital, but situation was already out of control, in response to an appeal from Raziya whom Shah Turkan had attempted to capture and put to death,<sup>18</sup> the people of Delhi were in favour of Raziya and Shah Turkan's conspiracy failed miserably.

Ibn Battuta says that Raziya wore the garments of the oppressed and appealed to the *an-nas* (army).<sup>19</sup> But most of the soldiers including the Turkish guards were absent from the capital and the appeal of Raziya must have been to the people of Delhi. The people of the city hearing about the conspiracy of the queen mother against Raziya rose up in rebellion, attacked the royal palace and seized Shah Turkan.<sup>20</sup>

The influential phase of Shah Turkan demonstrates that women in the Delhi Sultanate could be powerful. They were able to change the course of events and winning the nobles to their side. Unscrupulous acts ultimately made some of the prominent nobles oppose her and plotted to bring end of her reign. She also became influential in political arena because of her son's incompetence. If Ruknuddin would have proved to be an able ruler then she with her son could have been successful for a long period of time.

The Sultan retired to Kilugarhi and the revolt of the people met with success. The *amirs* and the soldiers, when they came back to the city took their oath of allegiance to Sultan Raziya. Ruknuddin was arrested from Kilugarhi and was imprisoned and put to death in Nov. 1236 A.D. He had ruled for only six months and twenty eight days.<sup>21</sup>

Like Shah Turkan, the Hindu women of princely background also assumed the role of regent when their son was minor king. For instance in 1278, Naika Devi the mother of Maharaja II, the minor Chalukya ruler of Gujarat acted as a regent. On untimely death of Bhima Deo soon afterwards, she placed her second infant son, on the throne. In 1278-79, when Sultan Muizuddin Mohammad Sam, the Ghurid ruler of Ghazna marched on a raiding expedition towards Gujarat, she took him by surprise near Mount Abu and put him to route.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> Ibn Battuta, *Rehla*, Tr. Mahdi Husain, op. cit., p. 34.

<sup>20</sup> *Tabaqat-i- Nasiri*, op. cit., p. 456, *Tarikh-i- Ferishta*, op.cit., p. 68.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 457.

<sup>22</sup> Majumdar R.C., *The Struggle for Empire*, Bombay, Second Edition, 1966, p. 78.

The other lady of the Delhi Sultanate during its early phase who left her mark as remarkable one on several counts was Sultan Raziya, the daughter of Sultan Iltutmish ( 1236- 1240 A.D. ).

Mention may be made to the two other royal ladies of this period. They are also the daughters and widow of Sultan Iltutmish. The relevant evidence about the daughter who happened to be the real sister of Sultan Muizuddin Bahram Shah (1240- 1242 A.D. ) shows that a Muslim woman did not think it derogatory at all to seek divorce from her husband if there was temperamental incompatibility. She was first married to the son of Qazi Nasiruddin but the marriage was dissolved afterwards. Again she was married to Aitigin, who had become the *Naib-i- Mulk* (regent ) after her brother's accession to the throne in 1240 A. D.<sup>23</sup> As far as the second lady, another widow of Sultan Iltutmish, she also married a senior noble, Qutlugh Khan and with the support of her new husband and his friends at the court she compelled Sultan Alauddin Masud Shah (1242- 1246 A.D. ) to release from prison the sons of Sultan Iltutmish, prince Nasiruddin Mahmud (her own son) and prince Jalaluddin. On the advice of nobles her son, Nasiruddin Mahmud was entrusted with the charge of the territorial unit of Bahraich, while Jalaluddin was posted as the *wali* (governor of) of Qanauj. She is also said to have accompanied her son to Bahraich,<sup>24</sup> because the latter was still a minor, aged less than fourteen years. Two years later she plotted in league with her husband against Sultan Alauddin Masur and won over the nobles at the court to support her son's claim to the throne. She confidentially carried on correspondence with the nobles in Delhi, and finally she secretly approached with her son from Bahraich for Delhi. On her departure for Delhi, she announced that her son was taken to Delhi for medical treatment. Both of them were taken in a palanquin, escorted by *sawars* (horsemen). In Delhi nobody, except the accomplices in the conspiracy, knew about their arrival till Sultan Alauddin Masud Shah was dethroned and her son was placed on the throne instead. She further tried to conciliate her son's position by having the daughter of Balban married to the Sultan. By now Balban had emerged as the leader of powerful Turkish nobility of the court. Soon after Balban manipulated to undermine her and Qutlugh Khan's position at the court.

Since the successor of Sultan Nasiruddin Mahmud, Sultan Giyasuddin Balban (1266- 1287 A.D.) was a strict disciplinarian of conservative outlook, he could not

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<sup>23</sup> *Tabaqat-i- Nasiri*, Tr. Raverty, Vol. I., op. cit., p. 650.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 676-77.



allow the ladies to meddle in politics. In fact the ladies do not appear to have played any important role during his reign. But his grandson and immediate successor, Sultan Muizuddin Kaiqubad was a man of ladies and he acquired ascendancy at the royal court.

Sultan Kaiqubad's successor Sultan Jaluddin Khalji, though a veteran learnt ears to his wife, allowing her to prevail in the affairs of the empire. His wife *Malika-i-Jahan*<sup>25</sup> wielded substantial authority as wife, mother and mother in law. As wife of Sultan Jalaluddin Khalji, she enjoyed complete influence over her husband. The nobles obeyed her because she wielded great influence at the court and amongst the nobility she commanded a respectable status. Even her daughter was married to the Sultan's nephew, Alauddin became so overbearing that her husband had become disgusted with her. The extent of her influence on her husband can be illustrated by the following episode narrated by Barani.

Barani informs us that when Sultan Jalaluddin Khalji expressed his wish to adopt the title of *Al Mujahid fi – Sabilullah*<sup>26</sup> ( the fighter in the path of Almighty ), because he had confronted the Mongols, and so he might be appropriately mentioned in the *khutba Al- Mujahis fi Sabilullah*. He sought his consort's (*Malika-i- Jahan*) advice.<sup>27</sup> He also requested her to speak on his behalf to the nobles, the *Qazis* and other religious men to propose the title to him in the court. Since *Malika-i- Jahan* commanded a lot of respect among the nobles , she found no problem in gaining their consent. It was at her persuasion that the nobles and *Qazis* proposed the Sultan to accept the title.<sup>28</sup> But his eyes filled with tears and acknowledged that he had directed *Malika-i- Jahan* to make the suggestion but he had since reflected that he was not worthy of the title ....as he had fought for his own gratification and vanity. So later on the Sultan himself declined to accept it.<sup>29</sup>

This event shows that *Malika-i- Jahan* acted as an advisor to the Sultan. And even enjoyed a respectable position among the nobility also and they welcomed her suggestions.

Alauddin had strained relations with his mother in law *Malika-i- Jahan* and with his wife, the daughter of the Sultan. He was apprehensive of the intrigues of

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<sup>25</sup> Barani Ziauddin, *Tarikh-i- Firozshahi*, Vol. II, eds. Sheikh Abdul Rashid, Aligarh, 1907, pp. 23-24.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 24-25.

*Malika-i- Jahan*, who had great ascendancy over her husband. Unable to incur the displeasure of *Malika-i- Jahan*, he could not even complain to his uncle against his wife's disobedience and misbehavior towards him. *Malika-i- Jahan* had caused strain in Alauddin's relation with his father in law.

We learn from *Tarikh-i- Firozshahi* that she was aware of his ambitious and intriguing nature and kept a close watch over him. She warned her husband about Alauddin's alleged intention to carve out an independent principality for himself <sup>30</sup> in some remote corners of the country. Perhaps it was she who created a feeling of suspicion in the mind of the Sultan.

This episode to a great extent was responsible in aggravating the domestic unhappiness of Alauddin. He was averse to bringing the disobedience of his wife before the sultan because he could not brook the disgrace which would arise from his derogatory position being made public. It greatly distressed him and he often consulted his intimates at Kara about going out into the world to making a position for himself by conquering a far off territory, and rule over it independent of his uncle so that he could remain away both from his wife and his mother in law.<sup>31</sup>

The strained relation between Sultan Alauddin Khalji and his wife<sup>32</sup> were further complicated by the uncharitable attitude of his mother in law *Malika-i- Jahan*.<sup>33</sup> Afraid of public disgrace and reluctant to hurt Sultan Jalaluddin Khalji.<sup>34</sup> Alauddin Khalji did not openly protest against undesirable activities of his wife and mother in law. But in heart of hearts, he felt very dejected.<sup>35</sup> This was the main cause of his remaining away from his wife and mother in law.<sup>36</sup>

*Malika-i- Jahan*, wife of Alauddin Khalji, being the daughter of the king always tried to domineer over her husband. The sudden rise of her father had made her exceedingly vain. Alauddin refused to become hen pecked. Being disgusted with the behavior of his wife, he began to neglect her and she made this ground for saying many unpleasant things. This made matter worse. Jalaluddin's wife tried to mind matters by brow- beating Alauddin which led to greater estrangement. Alauddin was wary of these ladies, life lost all charm for him, and he tended to grow indolent,

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<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p.50.

<sup>31</sup> Barani Ziauddin, *Tarikh-i- Firozshahi*, Vol. II., op. cit., p. 50.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p., 51.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

insipid and dispirited. Her impudence greatly distressed Alauddin, but he was averse to bringing the disobedience of his wife to the notice of the Sultan.<sup>37</sup>

Haji-ud-Dabir in *Zafar-ul-walih* elucidates the cause of misunderstanding between Alauddin and his consort. He says that the prince had two wives – one the daughter of the Sultan Jalaluddin Khalji, and the other Mahru, the sister of Malik Sanjar, later known as Alp Khan.

Jalaluddin's daughter had no knowledge about the other marriage, but when she came to know about it, she began to fret out their private life. One day when the Sultan was sitting with Mahru in a garden when she suddenly appeared and enraged at the sight began to beat Mahru with her shoe. Alauddin could hardly bear this insult and became infuriated and attacked her with his sword. She however escaped luckily only with a few minor injuries.<sup>38</sup>

The position of Alauddin's *harem* is not known but he had several wives- Jalaluddin's daughter, a sister of Alp Khan, Badshah Begum, a daughter of Kaiqubad, known as Malka Mahik and mother of Mubarak, Kamla Devi the daughter of Ram Dev, became the chief queen of Alauddin Khalji.<sup>39</sup> However K.S. Lal has rightly remarked that the Sultan does not seem to have been under feminine influence as such.<sup>40</sup>

At Karra, Alauddin breathed a sigh of relief and began to ponder over his past and to plan out his future. His one idea was to keep away from his wife and mother-in law.<sup>41</sup> It is difficult however to assign to the princess and her mother the entire blame for Alauddin's domestic unhappiness because he himself was not without faults. He had a haughty and uncompromising temperament can also not be over looked in this context.

Barani is critical of the role played *Malika-i- Jahan* after the death of her husband and describes her as the silly of the silliest. She played the most treacherous role of another in politics, after the death of her husband, Sultan Jalaluddin Khalji on 12 July 1296 A.D. Yet the analysis of circumstantial evidence suggest that she was a prudent lady and could take wise decision for meeting a critical situation of her husband's demise. She was a woman of determination, but was foolish and acted very

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<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> Haji ud Dabir, *Zafar-ul- Walih*, ed. D. Ross, p. 154. Cf. *Royalty in Medieval India*, op. cit. p. 85;

<sup>39</sup> Majumdar Ray Choudhari and Kalikinkar Dutta, *An Advanced History of India*, part- I, Delhi, Macmillan and Co. Third Edition, 1967, p. 293.

<sup>40</sup> *History of Khaljis*, op. cit., p 273.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 35-36.

imprudently. She felt that it would be dangerous to keep the throne vacant and thought to rule herself on behalf of her younger son Qadar Khan.<sup>42</sup>

Barani says that she would not await the arrival of her elder son Arkali Khan from Multan.<sup>43</sup> She neither wrote to him nor awaited his arrival, who was a soldier of repute. She did not inform him but after observing three days of mourning, hastily and rashly, and without consulting to anyone, she placed her youngest son Qadar Khan with the title of Ruknuddin Ibrahim<sup>44</sup> to the throne. He was mere a lad and had no knowledge of the world and incapable of managing state affairs. With few nobles, great men and officers she proceeded from Kilugarhi to Delhi and taking possession of the green palace, she distributed offices and fiefs among the *maliks* and *amirs*<sup>45</sup> who were at Delhi and began to carry on the government, receiving petitions and issuing orders.<sup>46</sup>

This act caused dissatisfaction among the nobles who opposed to Qadar Khan. They preferred a mature, experienced and brave heir like Arkali Khan.<sup>47</sup> Blinded by ambition and desire for royal power *Malika -i- Jahan*, who lacked both patience and intelligence, completely ignored the power of the nobles.<sup>48</sup> She concentrated all powers in her hand and practically ruled in the name of Sultan Ruknuddin Ibrahim,<sup>49</sup> who became a puppet in her hands.

But this liberal attitude of her could not ease the situation. She did not possess the requisite intelligence and skill to handle the political crisis smoothly and Sultan Ruknuddin was too incompetent to handle the situation. When Arkali Khan heard of his mother's unkind and improper proceedings, he was so much hurt that he remained at Multan<sup>50</sup> and did not come to Delhi, during the life time of the late Sultan there had been dissensions between the mother and the son. The nobles whom she had attempted to win over to her side changed their camp and extended their support to Alauddin Khalji.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Barani Ziauddin, *Tarikh-i- Firozshahi*, Vol. II., op.cit., p.70.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*; *The Campaigns of Alauddin Khalji*, op.cit., p. 38.

*Malika -i- Jahan* then sent a letter to Arkali Khan,<sup>52</sup> to this effect that she had committed a fault in raising her youngest son to the throne in spite of him. None of the *maliks* and *amirs* heeds him. And most of them had joined Alauddin. She wrote that the royal had departed from their hands. She wrote that you are the elder brother of the lad who is being placed upon the throne and you are more worthy and capable of ruling over here. Your brother will acknowledge his inferiority. She had committed a fault<sup>53</sup> but don't be offended with your mother's fault. So please come and take the kingdom of your father.<sup>54</sup> If you are angry and would not do so, Alauddin is coming with power and state, he would take Delhi and would not spare neither her nor him. But Arkali Khan did not come,<sup>55</sup> and wrote a letter of excuse for his arrival to his mother saying that since the nobles and the army had joined the enemy it was futile to join.

Arkali Khan was a man of irritable temperament. On receiving the report of his father's death, he himself should have come to Delhi, and in collaboration with the nobles, should have prepared for a war of vengeance against Alauddin. But he took such an umbrage at the injustice of his mother that he wished for the ruin of the new sovereign and refused to come to Delhi on the excuse that there was no hope of saving the capital when most of the nobles had gone over to the enemy, sulkiness on the part of Arkali Khan sealed the fate of the Jalali dynasty.

When things turned beyond her favour, hard pressed from all corners, *Malika-i- Jahan* was left with no alternative. She accepted her mistake in elevating Qadar Khan to the throne, and asked to be pardoned for her foolish act.<sup>56</sup>

When Alauddin, who remained at Kara, was informed about Arkali Khan's not coming to Delhi, and of the opposition of *Malika-i- Jahan*, he saw the opportunity which the family quarrel presented. Alauddin was cautious if not afraid of Arkali Khan, who alone could match his military reputation. Then he ordered his drums to be beaten in joy. When the Jalali nobles joined Alauddin at Baran, he rejoiced over the absence of Arkali Khan and set off for Delhi at once. In the midst of the reigns, although they were more heavy than any one could remember. Scattering gold and collecting followers, he reached the Jamuna. He then won over the *maliks*

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<sup>52</sup> Barani Ziauddin, *Tarikh-i- Firozshahi*, op. cit., p.71.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> Barani Ziauddin, *Tarikh-i- Firozshahi*, op.cit., p. 71.

<sup>56</sup> *The Campaigns of Alauddin Khalji*, op.cit., p. 38.

and *amirs* by a large outlay of money, and those unworthy men, greedy for gold of the deceased and caring nothing for loyalty or treachery, deserted *Malika-i- Jahan* and Ruknuddin Firoz and Joined Alauddin.

Ruknuddin Ibrahim went out of the city in royal state with such followers as remained to oppose Alauddin, but in the mid night all the left wing of his army deserted to the enemy with great uproar. Ruknuddin Ibrahim turned back; and at mid night he caused the Badaun gate of Delhi to be opened. He took some bags of gold *tankas* from the treasury and some horses from the stable. He sent his mother and females on in front and in the dead of the night he left the city by the Ghazni gate, and took the road to Multan.<sup>57</sup> But Sultan Ruknuddin Ibrahim, Ahmad Chap and *Malika-i- Jahan* were captured and brought back to Delhi,<sup>58</sup> where they were kept under the surveillance in the house of Nusrat Khan.<sup>59</sup>

Thus she proved herself to be an ambitious lady who thought of grabbing power for herself but situation was as such that she could not leave the throne vacant so she placed her younger son to throne which infuriated her elder son Arkali Kan not to come. Alauddin Khalji who was waiting for the right moment, took advantage of the family quarrel and finally the power of *Malika-i Jahan* was snatched.

With the accession of Sultan Alauddin Khalji to the throne in 1296 A.D., the ladies were again debarred from playing any part in the politics of the Sultanate. The relevant evidence available in the sources, however, casts light on their cultural life inside the palace. Certain customs and the ceremonies provided the royal ladies with opportunities to organize festivities on grandiose scale. For example, the dawn on the cheek of the youth was the signal for the mother to host a banquet and entertain the guests.

Among the writings of Amir Khusrau, *Dewal Rani Khizr Khan* is a famous poem, which throws invaluable light on the life and conditions of royalty during the Delhi Sultanate. In which he has chiefly described the love story of Khizr Khan, the eldest son of sultan Alauddin. During the first invasion of Gujarat (1299 A.D.), the officers of Alauddin Alauddin had captured a part of Rai Karan's harem, the ruler of Gujarat.

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<sup>57</sup> Barani Ziauddin, *Tarikh-i- Firozshahi*, op.cit. p. 71; *The Campaign s of Alauddin Khalji*, op. cit., p. 38.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*; Barani Ziauddin, *Tarikh-i- Firozshahi*, Tr. Fuller and Khallaq, *The Reign of Alauddin Khalji*, A. Banerjee, Calcutta, 1968, p.14.

<sup>59</sup> Nizami K. A. *A Comprehensive History of India*, Vol. V., New Delhi, Reprint, 2006, p. 331.

Among the captives was one of the Rai's wife, Rani Kamla Devi whom the Sultan married.<sup>60</sup> Soon she won the Sultan's affection by her beauty and devotion. Her daughter, Dewal Rani who was some seven- eight months old was brought to the royal *harem*. At the imperial court, the young daughter of Rai Karan was brought up with Khizr Khan the eldest son of the Sultan. And both of them fell in love with each other.<sup>61</sup>

*Malika-i- Jahan*, like most of the Indian mothers, thought to solve the problem by hastening marriage of her son Khizr Khan in 1312 A.D.<sup>62</sup> to the daughter of Alp Khan, governor of Gujarat and brother of *Malika-i- Jahan*. It was celebrated with great pomp by inviting Rajas<sup>63</sup> but the ceremony was a painful ordeal for the young prince who was compelled to accept his cousin as his bride while his heart longed for Dewal Rani.<sup>64</sup>

Khizr Khan However, could not forget his love. He kept away from his wife and used to meet Dewal Rani secretly. His health began to deteriorate and it only made matters worse. A mother's instinct could not long hesitate in making a choice and thinking it advisable not to risk the life of her son for the sake of her brother's daughter, *Malika-i- Jahan* obtained Alauddin's permission to marry Khizr Khan to Dewal Rani.<sup>65</sup>

At the same time, Mahru began to make preparations for the marriage of her second son Shadi Khan with the second daughter of her brother Alp Khan. By such matrimonial alliances, she aimed at strengthening Alp Khan's status in the court. The king was keeping indifferent health but Mahru was bent upon celebrating the nuptials....Prince Shadi Khan was married to the daughter of Alp Khan with great éclat. On this occasion Dewal Rani was also given in marriage to Khizr Khan. These marriages took place sometime during the year 1313-1314 A.D.<sup>66</sup> Meanwhile Mahru became averse and indifferent towards the Sultan spending his time in feast, festivals and functions held in connection with the marriage of her children and birth of grandsons, etc. This annoyed the Sultan during his illness but she did not bother about

<sup>60</sup> *A Comprehensive History of India*, op. cit., p. 402.

<sup>61</sup> Mohammad Habib, *Hazrat Amir Khusrau of Delhi*, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, 1972, p. 53.

<sup>62</sup> *History of Khaljis*, op. cit., pp. 263-64.

<sup>63</sup> *Futuh-us Salatin*, op. cit., p. 316, According to Isami, Ram Deva of Deogiri was invited to this function. Cf. *History of Khaljis*, pp. 263-64.

<sup>64</sup> *Hazrat Amir Khusrau of Delhi*, op. cit. p. 54.

<sup>65</sup> *History of Khaljis*, op. cit., pp. 263-64.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

the Sultan who was in great need of her care and affection. She remained engrossed in her political affairs.<sup>67</sup>

When Malik Naib returned from the Deccan, the sultan related to him the tale of his woe- how he had been neglected by *Malika-i- Jahan*, Khizr Khan and Mahru. The ailing king, complained that they were busy with marriages and other ceremonies of the *harem*, while Khizr Khan having obtained his most cherished Dewal Rani, was ever immersed in music and mirth and cared little about the king or the court.

All these things provided Malik Kafur, the *Naib-i- Mumlikat* and the rival of *Malika-i-Jahan* and her son, Khizr Khan to get hold over the mind of the ailing Sultan and nominate prince Umar Khan, born of the princess of Deogiri, heir apparent in place of Khizr Khan. On Sultan Alauddin's death (1316 A.D. ), Malik Kafur placed Umar Khan on the throne under the title of Sultan Shihabuddin and conducted the government on his behalf. But her ascendancy was short lived. Malik Kafur was killed by the night guards in the *Qasr-i- Hazar Satun* (one thousand pillared palace) and Shihabuddin was dethroned by prince Mubarak Khan after six months reign. Prince Mubarak assumed the title of Sultan Qutbuddin Mubarak Shah (1317- 1320).<sup>68</sup>

It may also be pointed out that the ladies of royal families were held in esteem by the members of ruling elite and the public as well. When Khusrau Khan married the widow of Sultan Qutb-uddin Mubarak Shah and distributed the ladies of the *harem* among the supporters, people were filled with indignation. On the fall of Khusrau Khan, Ghiyasuddin Tughluq (1320- 1324 A.D.) and his son Sultan Mohammad Tughluq (1324- 1351 A.D.) went out of their way to show consideration and respect to them. Sultan Mohammad Tughluq had the widow of Qutbuddin Mubarak Shah remarried to an immigrant noble, the son of the *qazi* of Cairo and on her account showered royal favour on him. The Sultan used to address her as his sister.<sup>69</sup>

The Tughluqs also had great regard for the ladies. The *harem* life of the Tughluq Sultans was characterized by sobriety, dignity and restraint. Ghiyasuddin Tughluq's personal life was extremely chaste and pure. His *harem* was perhaps very restricted and small. Our knowledge about Mohammad Tughluq's *harem* life is

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<sup>67</sup> Wahid Mirza, *The Life and Works of Amir Khusrau*, Idarah-i- Adabiyat-i- Delli, Delhi, 1974, p. 119.

<sup>68</sup> Kiran Pawar, *Women in the Indian History*, Vision and Venture, New Delhi, 1996, p. 93.

<sup>69</sup> Ibn Battuta, *Rehla*, Tr. Gibb H. A. R., *The Travels of Ibn Battuta*, Vol. III., N. Delhi, 1993, p. 758.



almost nil. However he looked after his mother, sisters and others with great personal concern. Tughluq dynasty witnessed the political influence of *Makhduma-i- Jahan*, widow of Sultan Ghiyasuddin Tughluq and the mother of Sultan Mohammad Tughluq ( 1225-1351 A.D. ). He was always respectful towards the queen mother and even he allowed her to exercise influence in matters of state throughout her life. It appears that she enjoyed precedence over the queens of the Sultan.<sup>70</sup>

While we possess very little information about the harem life of Ghiyasuddin Tughluq, all that can be inferred is that he had several wives and that his first wife was the mother of Juna Khan ( Mohammad Tughluq ), his eldest son.<sup>71</sup> She influenced him many years and was seen in her old age by Ibn Battuta as the mother of the ruling Sultan Mohammad Tughluq. She was the queen dowager, enjoyed the title of *Makhduma-i- Jahan* <sup>72</sup> (mistress of the world). Her advance age combined with the fact that she had borne Mohammad Tughluq, his eldest son, already a grown up man under Sultan Qutbuddin Mubarak Shah, able to command armies and cut a prominent figure in war, encouraged the conclusions that she was the first wife of Ghiyasuddin Tughluq. In all probability he married her on his arrival in India soon after the death of Sultan Ghiyasuddin Balban, as is evident from the memoir of their son, Sultan Mohammad Tughluq. Barani and Ibn Battuta are unanimous in praising the exalted lady and the Sultan's devotion to her. She was one of those virtuous, benevolent and charitable ladies who left their mark as great philanthropists. She received envoys, guests at court and gave magnificent reception to them in the capital.

Ibn Battuta, the Moorish traveler was one of them, who saw her in her advance age. When he reached Delhi, She was present there with her wazir *Khwaja-i- Jahan*. She received gifts and presents from the guests and also distributed gifts to others with an open heart. She maintained a large number of hospices for the comfort of the travelers <sup>73</sup> and endowed them to supply free food to all travelers. The foreigners who came to India to seek fortune were first extended hospitality on her behalf as guests. They were entertained with delicious food and then invested with silk robes of honour embroidered in gold. After it they were given unsew fabrics of silk, linen and cotton.<sup>74</sup> A separate department was organized which kept an account of her gifts and grants.

<sup>70</sup> Prasad Ishwari, *History of the Qaraunah Turks in India*, Central book Depot, Allahabad, 1974, p. 310.

<sup>71</sup> Husain Agha Mahdi, *The Rise and Fall of Mohammad bin Tughluq*, Delhi, 1972, p. 21.

<sup>72</sup> Ibn Battuta, *Rehla*, Beirut ( Lebanon ), 1964, p. 502.

<sup>73</sup> *The Travels of Ibn Battuta*, Tr. Gibb H.A. R., Vol. III, op cit., p. 736.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 737.

Being a woman of charitable disposition, she maintained a number of hospices which were run by state exchequer. Her acts of charity were a boon for several families which survived merely because of her help.

During the time of transfer of the capital first of all the Sultan shifted his mother *Makhduma-i- Jahan* with the entire household of the *amirs*, *maliks* and courtiers and slaves along with treasure and the royal hidden wealth shifted to Deogiri. Afterwards the Sultan summoned all the *Sayyids*, *Sheikh* (mystics), *ulama* and grandees of Delhi.<sup>75</sup>

The Sultan sought her able advice not only in the management of the royal household but also on various political issues.<sup>76</sup> It was through her timely intervention that the marriage of Bibi Raasti, the daughter of sultan Mohammad Tughluq, was solemnized with Sheikh Fathullah bin Sheikh Auhaduddin Nagoari, the grandson of Baba Farid in 1327 A.D. at Daulatabad.<sup>77</sup>

Mohammad Tughluq had great devotion and love for his mother, *Makhduma-i- Jahan*. On one occasion she went on a tour with the Sultan but he returned few days before. When she came back, the Sultan received her with great ceremony. He alighted from his horse and kissed her feet when she was in her palanquin.<sup>78</sup>

Unfortunately she had lost her eye sight at the time of Mohammad Tughluq's coronation.<sup>79</sup> Though based on hearsay, the following account of *Makhduma-i- Jahan*, as given by Ibn Battuta gives an idea of the éclat and splendour with which the occasion was celebrated: But she had lost her eye sight, which came about in this way; when her son ascended the throne, all the ladies and the daughters of *maliks* and *amirs*, dressed in their best clothes, came to pay their respect. She was seated in on a golden throne studded with jewels. All of them bowed to her. Then suddenly she lost her eye sight. She was treated by various means but could not get her eye sight back.<sup>80</sup>

In 1341 A.D., when the governor of Multan declared his independence, Mohammad Tughluq set off from Delhi to deal with him. On the way he heard about the death of his revered mother *Makhduma-i- Jahan* at Delhi. The Sultan was over

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<sup>75</sup> Yahya bin Ahmad bin Abdullah Sirhindi, *Tarikh-i- Mubarakshahi*, eds. Shams-ul-Ulama M. Hidayat Hosain, Calcutta, 1931, p. 99.

<sup>76</sup> *History of the Qaraunah Turks in India*, op.cit. p. 310.

<sup>77</sup> Rizvi S.A. A. , *History of Sufism in India*, Vol. I., Munshiram Manoharlal, New Delhi, 1978, pp. 130-31.

<sup>78</sup> Ibn Battuta, *Rehla*, op. cit., p. 502.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*

powered with grief, but having made arrangements of the distribution of alms for the benefit of the departed soul of his mother, he started for Multan.<sup>81</sup>

The tomb of Sultan Ghiyasuddin Tughluq which lies near the Tughluqabad fortress was built by Mohammad Tughluq over the grave of his father. Subsequently two other graves namely the grave of *Makhduma-i- Jahan* and that of Sultan Mohammad Tughluq himself were built in the premise.<sup>82</sup>

Sultan Mohammad Tughluq's death on 20<sup>th</sup> March 1351 A.D., plunged Delhi Sultanate into great confusion and chaos. It was further aggravated when the deceased Sultan's eldest sister Khudavandzada<sup>83</sup> intervened in the matters of succession. Unlike his wife, we find no mention in any contemporary or near contemporary records, his sisters are often mentioned. The most prominent being Khudavandzada, she had a son named Dawar Malik. Other sisters have been mentioned in the *Rehla* which bears testimony to the kindness, he uniformly showed to them. Before Thatta campaign, the Sultan had summoned Khudavandzada and *Makhduma-i- Jahan* from Delhi, together with many Sheikhs, the *ulama*, the elders, *maliks*, horsemen and foot soldiers to join him in the camp.

Soon after the death of Sultan at Thatta, Khudavandzada, being in the royal lineage, she put forward the claims of her son, Dawar Malik<sup>84</sup> to the throne against Firozshah Tughluq<sup>85</sup> as she was present in the imperial camp at Thatta. She lodged a protest and asserted the superiority of the claims of her son. But Firozshah had been in the good books of Mohammad Tughluq and possessed first hand administrative experience. She appealed to Firozshah that he should help in restoring order in the realm by accepting the office of the regent. The nobles and the captains of the army attached no importance to his (Dawar Malik) Dynastic claims<sup>86</sup> and only stated that he was unfit for the kingly office because he was a minor and possessed no administrative experience.<sup>87</sup> She desired to achieve her ends by being harsh to the nobles. This hostile attitude of Khudavandzada infuriated the nobility who opposed her claims.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> *History of the Qaraunah Turks in India*, op. cit., p. 172.

<sup>82</sup> *The Rise and Fall of Mohammad bin Tughluq*, op.cit., pp. 242-43.

<sup>83</sup> Afif Shams Siraj, *Tarikh-i- Firozshahi*, op. cit., p. 45.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 46.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

The nobles made it clear to her that at such critical hour there was a need of competent person on the throne who could save the Sultanate from disruption. For this purpose Dawar Malik was too immature in comparison to Firozshah Tughluq. But Khudavandzada was firm in her stand and pressed the claims of her son for succession. She cared for her interest more and was least concerned about the welfare of the Sultanate. In order to avoid a civil war, Malik Saifuddin<sup>89</sup> an influential noble of the court made efforts to pacify Khudavandzada's stubborn attitude.<sup>90</sup> And he succeeded in his attempts and she withdrew her agitation. Thus she could not procure the throne for her son. The nobles assigned him the office of Naib Barbak,<sup>91</sup> the Khudavandzada yielded to the wishes of the nobles, in favor of Firozshah Tughluq, yet in heart of hearts she longed to place her son on the throne.

Here we again find that women in any relation were respected and were given due weightage to their words. She was respectfully told that her son was a minor and unfits to manage the state affairs. And even the Sultan did not want to hurt her feeling.

The authority of Firozshah was recognized even at the capital. The boy king was unceremoniously set aside to make room for him and was later killed or died a natural death.

Wolseley Haig calls Firozshah a usurper who overrode the claims of the legitimate heir of the late Sultan. He regards the boy king as truly a son of Mohammad Tughluq. But Ishwari Prasad points out a number of difficulties in doing so. He says that if the Sultan had a son, contemporary historians must have referred to his birth, Khudavandzada could not have pleaded in favour of her own son.<sup>92</sup> Firozshah Tughluq would not have inquired whether the Sultan had a son. The nobles could not have asserted that there was none and Firozshah would have never set his claims aside. But he does not explain why Khwaja Jahan should have placed an obscure child on the throne and if his motive was to grab power for himself why should he have offered the regency to Firozshah. Hence a suspicion is created that the Sultan did leave behind a son. Ferishta and Badaoni support this view. R.P. Tripathi also regards the boy as a legitimate son of the late Sultan.<sup>93</sup> If this be a fact, Firozshah was surely usurper in the light of current tradition but in point of law his election was

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<sup>89</sup> Afif Shams Siraj, *Tarikh-i- Firozshahi*, op. cit., p. 46.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>92</sup> Cf., Pandey A.B., *Early Medieval India*, Central Book Depot, Allahabad, Second Edition, 1965, p. 209.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*

not only valid but also in public interest. In this latter sense, the charge of usurpation falls to the ground.

Firozshah left no stones unturned in maintaining cordial relationship with his cousin Khudavandzada. He considered it proper to be coronated by her hand.<sup>94</sup> And she is said to have completed the ceremony of his coronation. Perhaps through this act he tried to express feeling of gratitude towards her for his succession. So on his visit to Khudavandzada, he fell upon her knees,<sup>95</sup> and pleaded her to fulfill his desire. She embraced him and placed the crown on Firozshah's head on 24 Muharram 752 A.H./ 20<sup>th</sup> March 1351 A.D.<sup>96</sup> In spite of this she cherished malice.<sup>97</sup>

Since then the Sultan made it a custom to pay visit to Khudavandzada after every Friday prayer.<sup>98</sup> Thus the Sultan continuously expressed his gratitude and paid his respect to Khudavandzada. During these visits Sultan Firozshah and Khudavandzada sat on the same carpet and discussed the issue of importance.<sup>99</sup>

It was after taking betel leave from her the Sultan came back to the palace. During these meetings Khudavandzada's husband, Khusrau Malik<sup>100</sup> stood beside them and her son Dawar Malik sat behind his mother.<sup>101</sup> It shows that she enjoyed great respect and privilege and also appears that she asserted herself in presence of her son and husband.

As it is clear that Khudavandzada had never abandoned the idea of placing her son upon the throne. She was just looking for the right moment. Before Firozshah started on his first Bengal campaign, she along with her husband organized a conspiracy against the Sultan to assassinate him at the time when he visited her.<sup>102</sup> For this purpose the armed guards were asked to stay in the nearby chamber and at Khudavandzada's signal they were to attack the Sultan.<sup>103</sup> Firozshah was completely unaware of this whole plot. As usual he went to visit Khudavandzada, but the timely

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<sup>94</sup> Afif Shams Siraj, *Tarikh-i- Firozshahi*, op. cit., p. 46.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 47-48.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>97</sup> *Tughluq Dynasty*, op. cit., p. 387.

<sup>98</sup> Afif Shams Siraj, *Tarikh-i- Firozshahi*, op.cit., p. 100.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 101.

<sup>100</sup> According to K. A. Nizami, Khusrau Malik was her son. *Comprehensive History of India*, op., cit. p. 581.

<sup>101</sup> Afif Shams Siraj, *Tarikh-i- Firozshahi*, op.cit., p. 101.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 103.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*

gesture of Dawar Malik upset the plan and Firozshah escaped unhurt.<sup>104</sup> The armed guards were arrested and they confessed their guilt.<sup>105</sup>

Even though her attempt to kill Firozshah ended in failure, the Sultan continued to treat Khudavandzada with consideration and granted her a fixed allowance. Her enormous properties, owing to which she had hoped to put her son on the throne, were confiscated and she was directed to lead a secluded life.

Her scheming husband, Khusrau Malik was deported<sup>106</sup> while Dawar Malik was ordered to visit the Sultan every month attired in a robe and slippers.<sup>107</sup> His property and wealth was confiscated to the state treasury and she got only a fixed allowance.<sup>108</sup>

The ambitious and conspiring Khudavandzada though met an unhappy end<sup>109</sup> but in a way she was always given due regard by the Sultan Firozshah Tughluq. Perhaps if she had not schemed against the Sultan, she would have a smooth and luxurious life. But her unwise act undid her better prospects.

### **Hindu Women in the harem:**

There is paucity of information in the contemporary sources about the establishment of matrimonial relations between the Hindu and Muslim members of the ruling class may also be analyzed. It seems to have been a well established custom in Europe as well as in the Asian countries that the paramount lord or his deputies could ask for the hand of their vassal's daughter in marriage with them or their sons. In Central Asia and Europe the Mongol rulers married Muslim and Christian daughters of their vassal chiefs, although the marriage of a Muslim girl with a non Muslim was forbidden by the *sharia* ( cannon law ).

During the period we get references of the Sultans who took Hindu women as wives.<sup>110</sup> Sultan Alauddin Khalji was the first to marry a Hindu lady Kamala Di (the wife of Raja Karan of Gujarat). He also married the daughter of Rai Ram Chandra Deo of Deogiri.<sup>111</sup> It is said that he wanted to marry Padmini, the peerless beauty of

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<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>106</sup> Afif Shams Siraj, *Tarikh-i- Firozshahi*, op. cit., p. 104.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>110</sup> *Tughluq Dynasty*, op. cit., p. 18. *Society and Culture in Medieval India*, op. cit., p. 10.

<sup>111</sup> *History of Khaljis*, op. cit., pp. 79-80.

Chittor, Malik Mohammad Jaisi, a poet of the Sixteenth Century, wrote an epic called *Padmavati* in 1540 A.D. in which he attributes the invasion of Chittor to Sultan Alauddin's desire to obtain possession of Padmini, the beautiful queen of Raja of Chittor.<sup>112</sup> His own son Prince Khizr Khan did not lag behind and married Dewal Rani, the daughter of Raja Karan of Gujarat.<sup>113</sup>

Sultan Firozshah Tughluq's father Rajab, fell in love with a Hindu girl, and after much resistance won her as his wife.<sup>114</sup> Even Sultan Firozshah Tughluq who made *sharia* the basis of his administration took Hindu women as his wife.<sup>115</sup>

The concept of taking a non- Muslim wife filtered amongst the Sufis also. Khwaja Moin-ud-din Chisti who professed polygamy had a Hindu wife named Ummatullah, the daughter of Raja of Ajmer.<sup>116</sup>

In India the practice of the marriage vassal chief's daughter with the Sultan or his son seems to have begun with the reign of Sultan Ghiyasuddin Balban. Prince Mohammad known in history as Khan Sahib is said to have married the daughter of Rai Kalu in the Punjab. The relation between the Rai and his son in law remained cordial. When the prince was killed by the Mongol invaders on the battle field in 1286 A.D., Rai Kalu paid huge amount of money to the Mongols to take back his dead body.<sup>117</sup>

These girls accompanied the Sultan on his expeditions; they rode horses blandishly to the Sultan's left and right, rear and front, while the main army moved keeping considerable distance. He halted wherever he was fascinated by the charm of meadow, sipped wine and enjoyed himself with the girls.<sup>118</sup> The relevant evidence also suggests that a chief could refuse to accede to the request of a governor in this respect. For example, Rana Mall Bhatti, the chief in the territorial unit of Abohar that was included in the *iqta* of Dipalpur under the governorship of Ghazi Malik refused to accept the proposal of the governor with regard to his daughter's marriage with Sipah Salar Rajab, his younger brother. Annoyed by Rana Mal's refusal, Ghazi *Malik* came to his *zamindari* and demanded the payment of annual revenue dues and harassed the

<sup>112</sup> *History of Khaljis*, op. cit., p. 102.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 264- 65.

<sup>114</sup> Agha Mahdi Husain, *The Rise and Fall of Mohammad bin Tughluq*, Idarai-Adabiyat-i- Delli, Delhi, 1972, p. 21.

<sup>115</sup> *Tughluq Dynasty*, op. cit., p. 408; Firozshah Tughluq married a Hindu girl from Gujar stock.

<sup>116</sup> Dehlavi, Sheikh Abdul Haqq Muhaddis, *Akhbar-ul- Akhyar*, Matba-i- Muhtabai Delli, Delhi, 1332 A.H./ 1914., p. 24.

<sup>117</sup> *Futuh-us Salatin*, op. cit., pp. 180-181.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 564-65.

*muqaddams* and *chaudharies* because they were unable to clear the dues. The entire population in that region had to suffer from the harsh measures adopted by the governor. Having heard of the suffering of people, the Rana's mother came to see his son weeping. The grand daughter who stood in the courtyard asked her the reason why she wept. When told the cause of people's suffering, she said: "it should be taken as if one daughter was carried away by the Mongols as captive". As a matter of fact, the frequent Mongol invasion of the Punjab had impact on the psychology of people and the two religious communities had come close to each other. Thereupon, her father changed his mind and she was married to Malik Rajab.<sup>119</sup>

Thus, it appears that inter-caste marriages did exist during the Sultanate period. But a crucial analysis brings forth an important fact which cannot be ignored. These marriages were generally not welcomed. In most of the cases these marriages were almost forced. Thus it does not vindicate a free intermingling of castes.

The *harem* was closely guarded and a separate establishment consisting of slave girls and eunuchs maintained liaison between the 'inner' and the 'outer' world. When the Sultan proceeded on some campaign he assigned the *harem* to the care of some of the most reliable nobles.

The influence of royal *harem* in the political sphere during the Sultanate period varied accordingly to their personality, family connections, political situation and the character of the Sultan. Those who were successful in manipulating the situation in their own interest or in the interest of their sons, had to depend on the support of men. By virtue of their tact, intelligence and diplomacy they often strengthened the Sultanate. But sometimes impelled by their ambition, intriguing and self seeking nature, their participation in political issues created more problems for the Sultanate.

We can thus conclude that women enjoyed a respectable position in the *harem*. They were consulted in political issues, helped the Sultans according to the situation. They had lust of power and support of the nobility which made them pit their sons as plausible claimants. They had a considerable influence on their husband, and even controlled the administration and issued *farman* in their name. They were in no way subordinate in status to men in controlling the administrative machinery.

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<sup>119</sup> Afif Shams Siraj, *Tarikh-i- Firozshahi*, op. cit., p. 40.



## Chapter III

### Glimpses of Women in Indian Painting

Paintings have been acknowledged as vital source of information as it gives visual information to the viewer. For our present work, the rich Indian paintings make a significant contribution towards our understanding of the multifarious role of women in Delhi Sultanate. One finds women extolled for beauty, modesty and chastity, the set role perception of women. At the other hand, we find them administering responsible jobs like distillation of sorbet, preparation of perfumes, preparation of bread and cakes and carrying water in pitcher etc. These paintings guide our journey through the period and appreciate the aesthetic culture, trend, habits as dress- ornaments as well as the style of painting. During the Sultanate rule in India, very few examples of painting are available because flourishing of art was experienced in the time of the Mughals. However, we have presently interesting examples of Sultanate painting culled for studying women.

The chapter intends to focus the paintings containing depiction of women. The historical paintings are found important in reconstructing the history of people and the material culture of their times. These are as meaningful as the contemporary chronicles since they furnish information in an illustrated form. These paintings reveal social status, contemporary customs and habits, and also the glimpses of the composite culture. These pictures create curiosity and a desire to know more about the characters depicted in the painting.<sup>1</sup>

The major paintings utilized in the present chapter are *Kalpasutra* and *Kalakcharya Katha* from Gujarat (1370- 1380 A.D. ), *Kalpasutra* painted at Mandu (1439 A.D.), *Kalpasutra* painted at Jaunpur (1465 A.D. ), a folio from *Khamasa* of Amir Khusrau ( Late 15<sup>th</sup> Century), folios from *Hamzanama* (Late 15<sup>th</sup> Century), folios from *Sikandarnama* (Late 15<sup>th</sup> Century), folios from *Laur- Chanda* (Late 15<sup>th</sup> Century) and folios from *Nimatnama* illustrated at Mandu ( 1500-1510 A.D. ). In these paintings we find the glimpses of women in different forms.

Numerous paintings of early medieval times exhibit outdoor scenes. They cover the various aspects of every body's life. These paintings show women at work. They also provided assistance to men in certain daily tasks. Interesting details from

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<sup>1</sup> Gaur Albertine, *Women in India*, London, 1980, p. 3.

Sanchi Stupa I, of period c. 50 B.C. to 1000 A.D., provide information on women engaged in household tasks such as husking of rice in mortar with pestle, crushing grain with stone pestle, winnowing rice and rolling dough for cake.<sup>2</sup> Besides, the fetching of water from the village well, carrying pitcher (Plate- V), these were the tasks accomplished by women. *Waqiat-i- Mushtaqi* also allude towards womenfolk (Rajput) drawing water from the well.<sup>3</sup> A Jain Painting of c. 1500 shows women milching cows and clarifying butter.<sup>4</sup> *Khair-ul Majalis* mentions women earning their livelihood through maintenance of cow.<sup>5</sup> These paintings are also a fine source of information for the study of costumes and ornaments. A detailed appraisal in the subsequent discussion highlights these points in the description of painting i.e. their stylistic features.

Effective Muslim rule in Northern India commenced from the first half of the Thirteenth Century A.D. The immigrants from Central and West Asia from different cultural social and political settings gradually began accommodating themselves to the customs and cultures of India. This resulted in mingling of external with indigenous in the realm of art, architecture, literature, music, technology and social and political institutions. This intermingling produced a synthesis of the best art features.

It seems that Iranian influence on Islamic art is undoubtedly great and predominant. It is a fact that throughout the long centuries of Islamic history one of the major inspiring forces of Islamic civilization and especially art has been Persia. The traditional miniature paintings, architecture, ceramics, designs in decorative buildings, roofs, walls etc. and all different Persian motifs, in the field of art, left an everlasting effect on Islamic art.

In the field of miniature painting or portraiture the Indo Persian School has its unique place in all Asiatic schools of art as has been acknowledged by V.A. Smith, "The special glory of the Indo Persian School, distinguishing it above all other schools of Asiatic art, is its high attainment of portraiture."<sup>6</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Verma S. P., 'India at work in Sculpture and Painting', *Souvenir for Indian History Congress*, 1994, pl. III.

<sup>3</sup> Mohd. Sheikh Rizy Ullah, *Waqiat-i- Mushtaqi*, Tr. Siddiqui I. H., Delhi, 1993, p. 52.

<sup>4</sup> *New Documents of Indian Painting- A Reappraisal*, op. cit., plate- 144.

<sup>5</sup> Qazi Hamid Qalandar eds., *Khair-ul- Majalis*: Discourses of Sheikh Nasiruddin Chiragh-i- Delli, Urdu tr. M. Ahmad Ali Delhi, not dated., p. 147.

<sup>6</sup> Smith V.A., *A history of Fine Art in India and Ceylon*, University of Oxford, London, 1911, p. 496.

With the establishment of Sultanate rule in Delhi in the beginning; Baghdad, Bukhara and Samarqand were regarded as the centre of Muslim learning and culture. With the ransacking of Baghdad in A.D. 1258 by the Mongol chief Hulagu Khan, the centres sought safety in India. Later in the times of Khalji's (1296-1320 A.D.), we again find cultural and trade relationships with foreign centres resumed, this time principally with Persia. During the rule of the Tughluqs this nexus between the Delhi Sultanate and other centres of Muslim culture outside India greatly increased and these included cities not only in Persia, but also Iraq, Egypt and Central Asia.

The furtherance in cultural and trade relations with Iraq, Persia and other countries, facilitated import of many illustrated manuscripts to India like the *Maqamat of Al-Hirari*, the *Fables of Bidpai*, the *Jami-at- Tawarikh* of Rashid-ud- din, the *Shahnama* of Nizami, etc. These works served as an inspiration to the Indian painters. The distinction between Hindu and Muslim art is not as much racial as social. The former being an art belonging as much as to the peasant and the king. The latter is essentially an art of court connoisseurs, owing much to royal patronage.<sup>7</sup>

It is said that during Sultanate period private chambers of the Sultans had wall paintings. Several references to painting in the Sultanate period appear in the *Tarikh-i- Firozshahi* of Afif, a contemporary of Firozshah Tughluq who observes that, Firuzshah Tughlaq (1351-1381 A.D.) stopped this practice, and issued the order that these ateliers (*Karkhanas*) should not turn out pictures, as it is un- Islamic.<sup>8</sup> Under the Sultans, artistic activities were patronized and the calligraphy enjoyed an exalted position. The canons of beauty were expressed in terms of mathematical order, in the static concept of geometry. Here an observation of Rawson is relevant who states that there is no Islamic painting in India that can be added earlier than 1500.<sup>9</sup>

During Sultanate period the art of painting was treated merely as one of the decorative art which was to be used to enliven the blank surfaces of the bedroom walls.<sup>10</sup> An interesting point of the Sultanate period is that the Sultans of Delhi had *Karkhana* (atelier) which employed painters (ornamentalist), and calligraphers. We learn from the Afif's *Tarikh-i Firozshahi* that in the reign of Firozshah Tughlaq,

<sup>7</sup> Jamila Brijbhushan, *The Costumes and Textiles of India*, D. B. Taraporevala sons & co. Ltd., Bombay, 1958, p. 27.

<sup>8</sup> Afif Shams Siraj, *Tarikh-i- Firozshahi*, op. cit., pp. 374-75; Azra Alavi, eds. *The Futuhat- i Firozshahi*, Delhi, Idara-i- Adabiyat-i- Delli, 1996, pp. 27-28.

<sup>9</sup> Rawson Philip S., *Indian Painting*, New York, 1961, p. 104.

<sup>10</sup> *New Documents of Indian Painting – A Reappraisal*, op. cit., pp. 5-6.

Khawaja Abul Hasan was charged with the general superintendence of all *Karkhanas*.<sup>11</sup>

Indian painting during the Fourteenth and Fifteenth century attained full glory and flourished in Northern, Western and Eastern India. We find many beautifully illustrated manuscripts at Gujarat, Mandu (Malwa), Jaunpur and Delhi, etc.

The Delhi Sultans assumed considerable control in Northern, Western and Eastern India. For in the Fourteenth Century, therefore a province wise study is required. It has been observed that from about 800 A.D. onwards, there is a change in the physiognomy of Western Deccani and mid- Indian painting. Taking the figures as an example, the change shows a complete change of the earlier style.<sup>12</sup>

The Indo-Persian style evolved in Indian painting during the Sultanate period in Gujarat. Whether there was Persian influence on the Western Indian or Gujarat school is a plausible question at the Gujarat school of painting (Western Indian School).

From Gujarat, we find numerous Jain illustrated manuscripts. Prior to the second half of the Fourteenth Century, we find all Jain manuscripts with illustrations on palm leaves, as paper was not yet familiar in this region. In fact, even in the palm-leaf Jain manuscripts of this period, one can discern a conscious effort to improve the quality of the draughtsmanship and colours. This is not altogether unexpected because the painters of the *pattis* (margin) of the folio of the Twelfth Century were undoubtedly skillful and in course of time it must have come to be felt by the more sensitive of the illustrators that even hieratic formulae could be enlivened by superior draughtsmanship, livelier composition and attractive colouring.<sup>13</sup>

The earlier known Jain illustrations were the famous illustrated manuscript of the *Kalpasutra* and *Kalakacharya Katha* in the collection of the Chhatrapati Shahu Vastu Sangrahalaya (formerly, Prince of Wales Museum), Mumbai. It contains one hundred and eight folios measuring approximately 30.5 x 7.6 cm. and forty illustrations. The margins on both sides are delineated by red and black lines; in the centre of the folio appear red circles. The background is brick red (See coloured Plates) and the colours used are white, red, yellow, black, green, carmine and indigo.

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<sup>11</sup> *New Documents of Indian Painting –A Reappraisal*, op. cit., p. 6.

<sup>12</sup> Kramrisch Stella, *The Art of India*, London, Second Edition, 1965, p. 47.

<sup>13</sup> *New Documents of Indian Painting –A Reappraisal*, op. cit., p. 10.

Gold has been very sparingly used for accentuating certain details of costumes, ornaments, furniture and architecture. It is datable 1370 to 1380 A.D.<sup>14</sup>



**Plate- I**

Top: Kalaka and *Sahi* chief. Bottom: Balamitra and his wife.  
Folio from the *Kalpasutra* and *Kalalacharya Katha*.  
1370-1380 A.D.

Chhatrapati Shahu Vaastu Sanghralhalaya (formerly, Prince of Wales Museum), Mumbai.

An illustration from this manuscript shows Kalaka (woman ), the main female character of the painting, with a *Sahi* chief, the hero of the painting and in the lower part Balmitra and his wife (Plate- I). Here certain features of Jain painting are discernable like the vivid simple color combination, the profile view, the farther projecting eye etc. These bear evidence to the existence of art workshops prior to any Islamic patronage.<sup>15</sup> Usually the male figure has a prominent forehead marked with a V- shaped *tilaka*, padol shaped eyes with arched eye- brows, small mouth, thin lips, pointed nose and beard.

The female figure though adhering to certain conventions is treated quite attractively (Plate- I). The forehead marked with a *Tilaka* (mark) is narrow, the roundish face has the usual double chin, the breasts are well developed, nose is sharp and the eyes are elongated with collyrium. The most interesting point in this painting is the appearance of foreign style of painting *Sahi* which has been borrowed from Persian painting. It may be suggested that the *Sahi* types were borrowed from contemporary Muslim rulers, courtiers and soldiers who were dressed in the Persian

<sup>14</sup> *New Documents of Indian Painting –A Reappraisal*, op. cit., pp.13-14.

<sup>15</sup> Gray Basil, *The Arts of India*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York, First Published, 1981, p.126.

manner because of their strong bias in favour of everything Persian. This is the characteristic of Persian traits in Western Indian School.<sup>16</sup>

The Western Indian or Gujarati art tradition took a more subtle turn at Mandu. The ancient Mandapadurga, which was the former capital of Malwa, merged with Madhya Pradesh. The Sultans of Delhi extended their power over Malwa in the second quarter of the Thirteenth century, but Mandu gained importance only under Dilawar Khan, the Tughluq governor, who assumed the royal title in 1401 A.D. The city built in 1406-07 A.D., named as Shadiabad (the city of joy). Mahmud Khan Khalji ascended the throne in 1436 A.D. and reigned till 1469 A.D. He was a patron of learning and culture and founded several colleges for teaching philosophy, theology and literature.<sup>17</sup>

There is paucity of information about the state of painting at Mandu during the period of the early Muslim occupation. However, three illustrated manuscripts, two of the *Kalpasutra*, and one of the *Kalakacharya* shows that by 1439 A.D., Mandu developed an individual style. The Mandu *Kalpasutra* of 1439 A.D. contains seventy three folios of which four are missing and the rest preserved at the National Museum, New Delhi. The folios measure 29x 10.1 c.<sup>18</sup> The text, running into seven lines per folio, is written in gold letters on a crimson background. The illustrations usually appear on the right side of the folio. It is clear from the text that the manuscript was written for one Kshemahamsa Gani at Mandu in 1439 A.D., during the reign of Mahmud Shah Khalji who was a lover of art and culture.

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<sup>16</sup> *New Documents of Indian Painting –A Reappraisal*, op. cit., pp.13-14.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 16-17.



## Plate –II

Upper register: King Siddhartha conversing with Trisala.

Lower register: Trisala reclining on the bed.

Folio from the *Kalpasutra* painted at Mandu.

Dated A.D. 1439.

National Museum, New Delhi.

An illustration from this manuscript represents king Siddhartha conversing with Trisala while she reclines on the bed (Plate- II). The entire composition is divided into panels containing different episodes in the narration. It follows the immediate conventions of the Western Indian or Gujarati style but of course, is superior in draughtmanship, colour, representation of detail, protruding eye<sup>19</sup> and finish to the general run of the *Kalpasutra* illustrations.

In the lower part of the composition (Plate- II), Trisala is shown lying on the white and red dotted quilt of the bed. This particular device may have been borrowed from the Persian painting. Her hand and feet are fairly well drawn indicating the nails with white dots. At many places, it has taken recourse to *mudras* or hand gestures to express emotions. As is the characteristic of the Western Indian or Gujarati style, the male waist in the Mandu miniatures of 1439 A.D., tends to fullness while the female waist is narrow but not so narrow as in Gujarati manuscripts.

The female costume is of considerable interest (Plate- II). Women are shown wearing a patterned *sari* which is tied around the waist. A waist sash is attached that looks like a pouch. The jacket is half sleeved and completely covers the navel while the *odhani* (a long flowing sheet used to cover the head and shoulder) is draped over the jacket and head. In some folios, the *odhani* completely drapes the chest crossing it in a broad band. The *sari* is decorated with variety of patterns. There is no doubt the

<sup>19</sup> *The Art Heritage of India*, op. cit., pp. 116-117.

painter, with his love for details, has taken great pain to represent accurately the contemporary textile patterns. The ornaments worn by women are somewhat similar to those worn by men.

The ornaments worn by a royal woman (Plate-II) comprise earrings, pearl necklaces, bracelets, anklets, gold *churis* (bangles), heavy anklets and a series of rosettes and *chudamani* (head ornaments). The colours employed are red, carmine, blue (azurite), green (copper sulphate), yellow, ochre, mauve and pink. Gold colour is applied in painting ornaments and in certain details of furniture, architecture and landscape.

After the lapse of almost a quarter of a century, an illustrated *Kalpasutra* is found at Jaunpur (Uttar Pradesh) in 1465 A.D. in the reign of Husain Shah Sharqi. The manuscript belonged to the Hamsavijayaji and is now preserved at Narasimhajina Polna Jnana Bhandar, Baroda (Plate- III). It has eighty six folios and each folio is measuring approximately 27.3 x 11.5 cm. There are eight miniatures and seventy four decorative borders.<sup>20</sup>



**Plate –III**

Trisala witnessing a dance performance.  
Folio from the *Kalpasutra* painted at Jaunpur.  
Dated A.D. 1465.  
Narasimhajina Polna Jnana Bhandar, Baroda.

A miniature mentioned above belongs to this manuscript. It exhibits a royal woman, Trisala witnessing a dance performance (Plate- III). In the foreground two female dancers are shown wearing *choli*, and pearl ornaments. If the female type in this Jaunpur manuscript is carefully analyzed disregarding the farther projecting eye, we

<sup>20</sup> *New Documents of Indian Painting –A Reappraisal*, op.cit., pp. 24-25.



find a type with flat head, wiry body and drapery standing out stiff at angles there from. The most noticeable feature of this *Kalpasutra* is the presence of turbaned musicians (Plate-III). This particular type of turban probably comes from Jaunpur area<sup>21</sup> though painted much later. Women folk in the Jaunpur *Kalpasutra* illustrations like those in the Mandu *Kalpasutra* of 1439 A.D. (Plate-II), often wear the *odhani* as a broad band across the breasts and both men and women, have yellow, sandal and golden brown complexion. Though commonly all the exaggerations of the Western Indian or Gujarati style appear. One however finds yet in the figures of female dancers, the drawing is more studied, the movements are more lyrical.

The reason why Jaunpur should be a centre of such an opulent style can be gleaned from the contemporary historical perspective. Jaunpur was the capital of cultured Sultans who loved literature and architecture. It was also the city of a flourishing Jain community. Some must have been of Gujarati and Rajasthani origin such as the Srimali caste to which Harshini, the donor of the manuscript, belonged.<sup>22</sup> Undoubtedly the intimate relationship between the Jaunpur and Western Indian or Gujarati style all over the country, particularly at centres where there were Jain congregations.

At the same time, however, it will not be proper to doubt the specific points in the Jaunpur style which give its individuality. It shares with the Western Indian or Gujarati style of the Fifteenth Century an inordinate fondness for gold as a flesh colour which though showing the richness of the patron who commissioned the manuscript. Jaunpur was one of the most important cities in Northern India in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries. It was eminently suitable for the development of trade, commerce and banking in which Jain merchants specialized.

After about 1450 A.D., however we have material, howsoever limited, to suggest the growth of a *bourgeois* style of illustrating Persian classics in some of the Sultanate provinces.<sup>23</sup> It is not a court style, yet there is a curious juxtaposition of Persian and Western Indian or Gujarati style. Though it is of little artistic value, it nevertheless possesses a quaint charm, and has high historical importance. With many books being copied for bibliophiles and others, there was bound to be an emphasis on good calligraphy and we learn from the *Mirat-i- Sikandari* that Muzaffar II (1511-

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<sup>21</sup> *New Documents of Indian Painting –A Reappraisal*, op.cit., pp. 24-25.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 45.

1526 A.D.) was not only skilled in the art of calligraphy but was himself a fine calligrapher. If however, a court style existed in Sultanate Gujarat, there is no evidence.

In the *bourgeois* style attention may be drawn to some illustrations from the *Khamisa* of Amir Khusrau. Twenty four folios of the above manuscripts are relevant. These are described to have been illustrated at Delhi. Douglas Barrett and Basil Gray suggest the provenance as Gujarat<sup>24</sup>, during the late 15<sup>th</sup> century (Plate- IV).<sup>25</sup> In our opinion an architectural feature such as the squat dome has been evolved from the Tughluq architecture of Delhi, but this evidence alone is not sufficient to support a Delhi province, as squat domes and arched niches also appear in Fifteenth Century architecture in other parts of India. It is preserved at Freer Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.



**Plate-IV**

The traitorous Vizier repulsed by the queen.  
Episode in the *Hasht Bihisht* from a manuscript of Amir Khusrau Dehlavi's *Khamsa*.  
Late 15<sup>th</sup> century A.D.  
Freer Gallery of Arts, Washington, D.C.

Here in a miniature from this manuscript, we see traitorous Vizier repulsed by the queen (Plate- IV). The more pronounced Indian elements in the *Khamsa* illustrations are the use of strong red, yellow and green patches, the handleless ewers, high-backed thrones and above all the *odhani* (wimple) standing behind the head. Both male and female are depicted with broad faces which bear affinity with Perso-

<sup>24</sup> Douglas Barrett and Basil Gray, *Painting of India*, Cleveland, 1963, p. 59. Cf. *New Documents of Indian Painting –A Reappraisal*, p.45.

<sup>25</sup> According to Richard Ettinghausen, it belongs to mid Fifteenth Century. However, he finds it hard to discover its provenance. Richard Ettinghausen, *Painting of the Sultans and Emperors of India in American Collection*, New Delhi, 1961, Pl. I., cf. *New Documents of Indian Painting –A Reappraisal*, p.47.

Mongolian style. A type like *Sahi* is also of Persian origin. These miniatures seem to have been painted by an Indian artist who was commissioned to follow certain Persian models with regards to faces and costumes (Plate- IV).<sup>26</sup>

To the group of *Khamisa* of Amir Khusrau, an illustrated manuscript of the *Sikandarnama* of Nizami, about the middle of the Fourteenth Century can also be added here. Though it is more markedly a mixture of the Persian and indigenous tradition unfortunately, of which only miniatures have survived, it could not be acquired, though we were able to photograph all the miniatures which dispersed throughout the museums and collections of Europe and America.<sup>27</sup>

It describes the adventures of Alexander the Great over the land and sea. The miniatures are of a somewhat crude *bourgeois* type (Figure- I and II) in which Persian influence are mixed with the Western Indian or Gujarati style and Persianised Indian type appear. The manuscript might well have been painted to satisfy the requirements of a bibliophile who could not afford to procure a fine Persian manuscript nor commission a very superior painter. The costume worn by these types in the manuscript though derived from Persia in their ultimate origin might have been in fashion at the Sultanate court in the Fifteenth Century where this *Sikandarnama* was painted. Its probable date is also about late 15<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>28</sup> It also comes from *bourgeois* class.



**Figure-I**

Sikandar on the sick bed while returning from the Northern frontier to his homeland.  
Folio from *Sikandarnama*.  
Probably Uttar Pradesh or Delhi. Late 15<sup>th</sup> century A.D.

<sup>26</sup> *New Documents of Indian Painting –A Reappraisal*, p.46.

<sup>27</sup> Wilson R.P., *Islamic Art*, London, 1957, p. 18.

<sup>28</sup> *New Documents of Indian Painting –A Reappraisal*, op.cit., p. 47.

In an illustration from the *Sikandarnama*, Sikandar is shown on the sick bed after his return from the Northern frontiers to his home land ( Figure- I-II ). A royal woman in attendance stands before him. In the next painting, four women clad in black tunic, are shown mourning on the death of Alexander, the figures lose their stiffness and express their grief in no uncertain terms.

The figures are of two types,( Figure- I & II ) in the Indianised Persian type the face is generally oval, with continuous recurved eyebrows in the shape of a bow, fish shaped eyes almost joining together, black pupils usually receding to the corners and pointed beard and moustache. The Indian male type recalls the Western Indian or Gujarati type of the fifteenth century with oval face, recurved eyebrows, sharp pointed nose, big eyes with extended corners, the projection of the farther eye, rather long pointed beard.



**Figure-II**

Women Mourning on the death of Sikandar.  
Folio from the *Sikandarnama*.  
Probably Uttar Pradesh or Delhi. Late 15<sup>th</sup> century A.D.

While the female figures ( Figure- I & II ) similarly may be divided into two types- the Indianised Persian type and the Indian type. The characteristics of Indianised Persian type which has a round face, pointed nose, a thin line indicating the lips, large oval closely joined eyes with continuous eyebrow line in the shape of a bow, the dent of the chin indicated by a vertical line, long neck as if screwed on to the body thin and long wiry hair.

The Indian female type has a round face, eyes joined with the pupils in the centre, double chin, thin coney neck, small circular breasts with pointed nipples, one intersecting the other, pin point waist and triple braided chignon. It is also significant

to note that the torso is colour modeled, the face is not in profile and there is no projecting farther eye.<sup>29</sup> The typical male costume might be described as an inverted heart shaped turban, tunic reaching almost to the feet, waist girdle, *kamiz* (shirt), tight *pyjamas* and shoes or boots. The tunics are tight and full sleeved or half sleeved, the latter exposing the sleeves of the *kamiz*.

The women costumes are also two types, the Indian and Persian. The Indian princess is shown wearing a *chadar* or *odhani* round the neck, a full long sleeved *choli* and a chequered *sari* over which is tied an over garment. A notable feature of ornaments worn is the use of pompons on the waist. The Persian female types are shown wearing a long tunic ( Figure- I and II ) with tight fitting long sleeves or half sleeves and sometimes a white veil covering the head and falling over the back. The costume worn by them are almost similar to that used by Arabs, evident in Arab painting. They are shown in full or half sleeved long tunic, closely associated with *peshwaz*.

With regard to the date and provenance of the *Sikandarnama*, in the absence of the colophon or other dated material, it is not easy to reach any definite conclusion. We may not be far from the truth in suggesting that the *Sikandarnama* was painted in one of the Northern Sultanates, probably Jaunpur, in the late fifteenth century for a *bourgeois* client. It is a document more of historical than aesthetic importance.

The British Museum possesses an especial interesting example of the work of Bihzad, one of the illustrations in the copy of the *Darabnamah*, a book of stories from the *Shahnama*, formerly in the Royal Library at Lucknow. This picture represents two men and women among conventional rock scenery, the foliage, being treated with remarkable delicacy.<sup>30</sup>

This new tendency to illustrate the Persian classics, romances and story books is further evidenced by the extensively illustrated copy of the *Hamzanama*, dealing with romantic adventures of Amir Hamza, the uncle of the Prophet Muhammad, at present known in the collection of Sitzung Pressicher Kulturbesitz, Tübingen, West Germany (Plate-V).<sup>31</sup> It is somewhat crude bourgeois type, belonging to late 15<sup>th</sup> century. A cursory examination of the miniatures reveal that the *Hamzanama* was written and illustrated for some *bourgeois* patron who could not import a copy from

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<sup>29</sup> *New Documents of Indian Painting –A Reappraisal*, op. cit., p. 48.

<sup>30</sup> Smith V.A., *A History of Fine Arts in India and Ceylon*, op. cit., pp. 151-152.

<sup>31</sup> It was discovered by Richard Ettinghausen.

Persia or who could not afford an imported Persian illustrated manuscript of the story. It also seems he was not in a position to obtain the services of superior Indian artists for an accomplished production. The style of the *Hamzanama* which is crude, is closely related to the style of the *Sikandarnama* miniatures.<sup>32</sup>



#### Plate-V

Hamza meeting the water carrier.

Folio from the *Hamzanama*.

Probably Northern India. Late 15<sup>th</sup> century A.D.

Sitzung Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Tübingen, West Germany.

In some of these paintings, here Hamza is shown meeting a woman carrying earthen pitcher and in the second painting, Hamza witnessing a dance performance, and finally in the last painting, Hamza in a garden (Pl.V & Figs. III-IV). The Indianised Persian male type has resemblances to some of the *Sahi* type, painted in the late Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries and its affinity with the *Sikandarnama*, male type is too obvious to need emphasis. While the face is in profile without the farther projecting eye.

<sup>32</sup> *New Documents of Indian Painting –A Reappraisal*, op. cit., p. 51.





**Figure-III**

Hamza witnessing a dance performance.  
 Folio from the *Hamzanama*.  
 Probably Northern India. Late 15<sup>th</sup> Century A.D.  
 Sitzung Pressicher Kulturbesitz, Tübingen, West Germany.

The female figures are of two types- the Indianised Persian type and indigenous type. The Persian type has round face, exaggerated chest and thin waist, the body contours being more carefully drawn. The Indigenous type is presented by a group of dancers, the farther eye is eliminated (Figure- III and IV), resulted in a facial type. The action takes place against a brick red background; the colours are basic.



**Figure- IV**

Hamza in a garden.  
 Folio from the *Hamzanama*.  
 Probably Northern India. Late 15<sup>th</sup> century A.D.  
 Sitzung Pressicher Kulturbesitz, Tübingen, West Germany.

The costume (Figures- III & IV) of the male persianised type consists usually of long half sleeved *jama*, often *pyjamas* are commonly worn. The head gear is either a domed cap or a turban somewhat rounded at the top. And the women are wearing Persian costume additionally with a covering for head and shoulder i.e. a *chadar*, or *odhani*. The female dress consists of a long half sleeved *pairhan* often made of patterned material *pyjama*, and shoes. It is however, interesting to note that without exception, they are commonly shown wearing tasseled bracelets of Indian origin. The *odhani* floats back, the lower end projects stiffly at an angle while the portion which is supposed to cover the hair stands out balloon like behind the head.

The indigenous type women are represented by a group of dancers where the characteristic farther eye is eliminated. The costume of these dancers and musicians consists of tight fitting, *cholis*, *pyjama* and *dupatta*- a veil.

In the closing years of the Fifteenth Century, the taste of Indian painting extended its field to Vaishanava subjects and love poetry. We find the illustration of *Laur-Chanda* (Plate-VI and Figure-V), the versified romance of Laur, the hero, and Chanda, his beloved in the Awadhi dialect of Hindi, which is spoken only in certain areas of eastern U.P.,<sup>33</sup> composed by Mulla Daud. It was a ballad composed about 1370 A. D. for the *Diwan* of Firozshah Tughlaq (1351- 81 A.D.)<sup>34</sup>, and continued to be popular up to Akbar's time.

Five illustrated leaves from the earlier copy of *Laur-Chanda* are in the collection of the Bharat Kala Bhawan, Banaras. We find here the Awadhi texts on the reverse is written in Persian characters. These representative illustrations form the part of our study. The background is usually red and only basic colours are used (Plate-VI and Figure V). This manuscript shows Persian inspiration, but its assimilation of both Indian and Persian features, and the fine calligraphy points to an established court atelier in the first half of the Sixteenth Century, possibly at Jaunpur. Persian influence is seen in the colour use and decoration. The surface is divided in two or even three compartments, each compartment containing a part of the story. The compositional division into panels is an Indian conceptual device.

<sup>33</sup> *The Art Heritage of India*, op. cit., p. 115.

<sup>34</sup> *The Arts of India*, op.cit., p.127.





### Plate-VI

Biraspat describing the beauty of Laur to Chanda.  
 Folio from the *Laur-Chanda*.  
 Probabaly Jaunpur, U.P. Late 15<sup>th</sup> century A.D.  
 Bharat Kala Bhavan, Banaras.

The male and female are purely indigenous in form. Here the female type is retaining its Western Indian or Gujarati form in which the farther projecting eye is clear, the body contour shows a delicacy of treatment which is not common in the general run of Western Indian or Gujarati painting. An attempt is made to represent very small breasts separately and the thin waist is emphasized (Pl.VI & Fig.V). Flesh colour is indicated by yellow and pink. Male figure wear both Indian and Persianised costumes. In the Indian type, *dhotis* plain or patterned and shirts are worn in combination with a tiara or turban. And the female costume consists of *saris*, *cholis* and *chadar* or *odhani* which cover the hair and stand out balloon like behind the head, a style which persists well into the Sixteenth Century. The Persian influence pervades in an artist's palette and decoration.



**Figure-V**

Laur ascending the palace of Chanda.  
Folio from the *Laur-Chanda*.  
Probably Uttar Pradesh. Late 15<sup>th</sup> century A.D.  
Bharat Kala Bhavan, Banaras.

The importance of the Bharat Kala Bhavan's *Laur- Chanda* miniatures lies in the fact that in the present state of knowledge, they show a departure from the established Gujarati manuscript tradition in several respects and though they cannot be designated as notable works of art. They are important documents in the history of Indian painting proceeding the Mughal period.<sup>35</sup>

Some new developments took place in late Fifteenth Century and in the beginning of the Sixteenth Century. The developments moved in two directions. On one side was the courtly style patronized by the Sultans or their great *amirs* of which only four examples exist, namely the *Nimatnama* and *Miftah-ul- Fuzala* and the *Laur-Chanda* manuscripts of the Prince of Wales Museum and Ryland library.

Mandu, along with other provincial capitals, became an important centre of culture. Mosques, palaces, colleges and public gardens added to the grandeur of the capital. Like Jaunpur it also attracted men of learning who spread the re known of the court of the Sultans far and wide. The pattern of life at Mandu was totally akin to Persian life and court etiquette. The court language was Persian and the food and

<sup>35</sup> *New Documents of Indian Painting –A Reappraisal*, op. cit., p. 55.

costumes also imitated Persian styles. But inspite of Persian bias of the Sultanate court, indigenous influences frequently moulded its character.

Mahmud Shah Khalji of Mandu combined rare genius as a fighter, a builder and a man of culture who welcomed noted scholars. But there is no evidence to prove that Mahmud maintained an atelier of painters, though he might have done so.

Certain traits of the Turkoman style of Persian painting were adopted during the time of Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq (1460-1500A.D.), the successor of Mahmud at Mandu, who seems to have received some patronage of painting, in the last quarter of the Fifteenth Century and early Sixteenth Century A.D. On the other side the traditional style, apparently tiring of the established formulae also began to grow out of its conservatism by discarding certain convention including the farther projecting eye, showing better appreciation of landscape, achieving more freedom in composition and approach and adopting contemporary costumes for the dramatic personae instead of the conventional costumes which has stood till in Jain painting for over two hundred years.

During the time of Ghiyasuddin Tughluq, we find a cookery book, the *Nimatnama*; it was written for the Sultan Ghiyasuddin Tughluq at Mandu (1460-1500), and was illustrated for his son Nasiruddin (1500-1510 A.D).<sup>36</sup> It is preserved in the Indian Office Library, London, belonging to 1500-10 A.D. (Plate VII-VIII). The text of the *Nimatnama* deals with the most detectable recipes of all kinds with prescription for medicine, aphrodisiacs, cosmetics, perfumes and occasional direction for their use and a section on hunting etc. The subject matter throws some interesting side lights on medieval culture.

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<sup>36</sup> *The Arts of India*, op. cit., p. 127; But Khandalavala and Chandra have the opinion that it is misbelieved that it was done by his son Nasiruddin, *New Documents of Indian Painting –A Reappraisal*, op.cit., p.59.



### Plate-VII

Preparation and perfuming of *sherbat*.  
 Folio from the *Nimatnama*.  
 Painted at Mandu, 1500-1510 A.D.  
 India Office Library, London.

In its illustrations (Plates-VII-VIII), the draughtsmanship is simple and the figure of the king is treated in three quarter view of the Turkoman style or in strict profile. In the treatment of the female figures both Persian and Indian type appears side by side. In Persian type the female figures are closely associated to the Turkoman painting.<sup>37</sup> The Indian type appears side by side. In Indian type, the face is in profile, small pointed nose, thin lips, sloping chin and fish shaped eyes indicate the indigenous tradition, whereas the women of Persian origin have usually very fair complexion and the Indians vary from fair to dark. The Abyssinian women have black complexion. These must be women of the Abyssinian guard which Ghiyasuddin had around him, while some of the fair complexion women must be members of his female Turkish guard.

<sup>37</sup> *The Art Heritage of India*, op. cit., pp. 116-117.



### Plate-VIII

Method of preparing bread by mixing oil and flour.

Folio from the *Nimatnama*.

Painted at Mandu, 1500-1510 A.D.

India Office Library, London.

The Sultan is always dressed in a *jama*, trouser, cap or *pagri* tied over a skull *kulah* (cap). The women are dressed in Indian and Persian costumes. The Persian women wear *pairhan*, trouser, belt and *pagri* tied over the *kulah* while some wear trellised turbans with *kulah*, some cover their head with scarves and even some without any headgear( Plate- VII-VIII). The Indian women in Persian dress however, wear earrings and bangles. The Hindu women wear a long skirt and a transparent *odhani* covering a part of the chest and stretched in a straight triangle as if some stiffening material had been used. Changes in the mode of composition, however, are marked as compared to the indigenous tradition. The format of the painting to suit the composition of the text is also typically Persian.

To sum up, a brief analysis of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries of course, assures us that the pictorial representation deserves utmost attention of the scholars to build the history of the facets of material culture. Here we have only attempted to present and bring to light all the available evidence in a simple manner so as to enable scholars to pursue the path of discovery which alone can fill up the lacunae in the history of the pre Mughal painting.

From these paintings we get visual information which we may not ordinarily get from the chronicles. Nevertheless, it is true that the painting in early medieval times suffered stylization which confines the value of its evidence. However, the fact remains that the curious juxtaposition of indigenous and foreign elements gleamed in art of the early medieval period, laid the foundation of composite culture.

## Chapter IV

### Women and Religion

This chapter intends to investigate the scope of women in the realm of religion. The intention is to explore how far the dignity of holiness, spiritual status could be afforded by women given the patriarchal set up of Indian societies and what amount of latitude was allowed to women in the principal religions viz. Islam and Hinduism.

So far as Islam is concerned, it raised considerably the status of women in society as compared to what it was in the pre Islamic Arabia. With the change in Islamic polity since the eight century A.D., the Muslim women began to lose their rights and privileges. Therefore long before the foundation of the Delhi Sultanate in India, the Muslim society in Iran and Central Asian lands had become a stratified society. Muslim women fared more or less, in the same way as her counterpart in a non Muslim society elsewhere. The Muslim religious elite to whom spiritually remained a genuine concern, did adopt a different attitude towards women in consonance with a Quranic spirit.

On the basis of available evidence, here in this chapter an attempt has been made to investigate women's participation in the context of religion. The role played by women as Sufis and as the mothers of leading Sufis. Noteworthy in this context are Bibi Zulaikha, Bibi Auliya, Bibi Qarsum Masuma, Bibi Sharifa, Bibi Sara, Bibi Raasti, Bibi Fatima Saam, Bibi Fatima, Bibi Raani and Khadiji had even developed spiritual prowess and could perform acts of miracles. In Hinduism, with the advent of Bhakti movement women's role became very positive as well.

I have based this chapter mainly on Sufi literature; outstanding among them are, *Fawaid-ul- Fuad* of Amir Hasan Sijzi, *Khair-ul- Majalis* of Hamid Qalandar, *Akhbar-ul- Akhyar* of Sheikh Abdul Haqq Muhaddis, *Siyar-ul- Auliya* of Mir Khurd and *Siyar-ul- Arifin* of Sheikh Jamali etc.

Thirteenth Century is important in the annals of Islam and particularly in the history of Indian Muslim religious thought. This is the Century which gave rise to the famous mystic *silsilahs* (orders) of *chisti* and *suhrawardi* in India. These mystic orders served as beacon light for the Indian Muslims. The eminent personalities of these

orders, presented the ideals of Islam in a pristine purified form implemented practically in a living form through their own practices.

These outstanding saints put forward the concept of *wahdat ul wajood* (oneness of Being), equality of men and women, Love as a universal value, by their virtuous character and high ideals they brought about a revolution in Indian life and millions of non Muslims embraced Islam.

The initial phase of Sufism sees no distinction between the men and women Sufis. Since it was the attainment of an enlightened position that mattered not the gender of the person. With the development of Sufism in Islam, women too got the opportunity to attain a high status. Since the ultimate objective of the Sufi's quest was union with the divine, a seeker of the Sufi status was expected to renounce the material world and purge oneself of its attractions, simultaneously kindling the passionate love for God. Such a concept of the relationship between the seeker and the sought left no room for anyone to be disqualified from such pursuit merely on the basis of gender. The spiritual world was not segregated by gender. All those whom God chose to be his friends could attain the status by following the path of union with themselves. And those who could attain such position would earn this royal rank of being the spiritual one.

The hagiological texts of the Sufis are replete with the deeds and even the miraculous pursuits of women Sufis. These women exercised considerable influence, both during their lifetimes and after.

In the history of Sufism Rabia bint Ismail- al- Adwiya, from the Iraqi town of Basra (died. in 869 A.D. ) was the first woman to be called a Sufi formally.<sup>1</sup> Born into poverty, after the death of her parents, Rabia was sold into slavery as a child, having been seized by a man in the street and sold for six dirhams. Her numerous highly intense ecstatic experiences made her one of the greatest of all Islamic mystics.<sup>2</sup>

Rabia attained an exalted spiritual status through prayers and continued fasting. She remained celibate throughout her life. Many hagiologies say that Sufis, Hasan Basri, Malik Dinar, Sufiyan Sauri and Shaiq Balkhi were aware of her spiritual caliber and therefore frequented in her lonely hermitage and also at times when she withdrew to the wilderness.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *History of Sufism in India*, Vol. I., op. cit., p. 30.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*



In the hagiological treatises of Indian Sufism, she has been immortalized in an altogether unique and distinctive manner. Rabia for the first time emphasized the idea of love of God <sup>4</sup> as love for its own sake, and not the idea of loving God in the hope of paradise or fear of hell. This philosophical orientation prompted her to turn away from the materialistic world. This attitude soon became the hallmark of Sufism. In fact the very soul of early Islamic mysticism. Rabia earned the spiritual status of the greatest of the women mystics of Islam and she made significant contribution towards the development of Islamic Sufism.

Along with Rabia, many other women too made important contributions to the development of Sufism. And since God does not distinguish between his loved ones on the basis of their genetic structure, distinction based on the gender of the worshipper was redundant and superfluous indeed.

During the Sultanate period, *khanqahs* (monasteries) of these mystic orders were established almost in every part of the country and each monastery became a centre of Islamic preaching and guidance. During the course of time, different branches emerged from these mystic orders and even today millions of Muslims are associated with them. The tombs of the eminent saints of these mystic orders have turned into places of pilgrimages. Year after year Muslims and non Muslims in large number throng places.

Evidence suggests that the Sufis not only had sympathy with women but also admitted them in the circle of *murids* <sup>5</sup> (disciples) and provided them with religious guidance. Though the process of initiation differs slightly from that of men. Their attitude towards women was kind and liberal.

We learn from *Khairul Majalis* that Sheikh Nasiruddin Chiragh Dehlavi brought for the method of initiation of females as disciples in Sufi order. The Sheikh would first place his index finger in a bowl of water and recited some hymns. After that the pot was taken to the women who would immerse her index finger to complete her initiation.<sup>6</sup> The norms and practices to be adhered by the women were quite moderate and not rigorous or elaborate as during the early- Islamic period.

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<sup>4</sup> Grewal J. S. eds. *Religious Movements and Institutions in Medieval India*, New Delhi, Oxford University Press, First published, 2006, p. 319.

<sup>5</sup> Amir Hasan Sijzi, *Fawa'id-ul-Fuad*, Nawal Kishore, Lucknow, 1894 A.D./ 1312 A.H., p.22.

<sup>6</sup> Hamid Qalandar, *Khair-ul Majalis*, ( Majlis- 40 ) eds. K.A. Nizami, Department of history, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, 1959, p.134.

Sheikh Nasiruddin Chiragh Dehlavi made a significant contribution when he curtailed considerably the duties and obligations of the disciples to a minimum. He did not advocate any gender discrimination and ascribed similar obligations for both male and female disciples.<sup>7</sup> Such regulations applied to punctuality in their *namaz* and in observance of fasts. They were not to be cruel to children or commit any moral or legal offence. They were also not expected to hurt anyone by their thoughts, words or deeds.<sup>8</sup>

The initiation of a *qazi* to perform *chillah*, as disciples by Khwaja Zikrullah throws ample light on the difference in the *chillah* practice adopted by male and female disciples. The Khwaja asked the *qazi* to perform *chillah* by choosing any method applicable either to men or women<sup>9</sup> (*chillah* implied leading a pious life in isolation for forty days), concentrating mainly on prayers of God, observing fasts, thereby preparing eternal bliss. Khwaja Zikrullah, then elucidated the difference of method to be followed by men and women who desired to undergo *chillah*. For women undergoing *chillah* routine for forty days was prescribed. First she was to perform the usual ritual *wazu* (ablution) in preparation for *namaz*. During the ensuing period she was to lead a quite secluded life concentrating fully upon prayers. Further strict regulations were to be observed in matters of food, and restraints were placed on, so as not to break the sanctity of *wazu*.<sup>10</sup>

The males followed upon the same routine, but there was no restriction placed upon their diet which was to be only just moderate. If such prescribed observations were not strictly followed, the *chillah* lost its value. The rigours of these ascetic modulations were meant to ensure pious and pure life for the disciples in future. However as compared to men, more liberties were granted to women, perhaps in consideration of their weak constitution.<sup>11</sup>

These saints appreciated and encouraged their disciples in rendering assistance to women. For instance, Sheikh Nizamuddin Auliya once narrated to his disciples for their indoctrination the case of his teacher Maulana Alauddin Asuli of Badaun ( 13<sup>th</sup> century ). A Hindu woman from the village of Kanehar (near Badaun) was sold as a slave to the Maulana. He converted her to Islam. One day when the Maulana found

<sup>7</sup> Hamid Qalandar , *Khair-ul Majalis*, ( Majlis- 40 ), op. cit., p.134.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, Baba Farid stressed that women should abstain from using abusive language. *History of Sufism in India*, op. cit., p. 147.

<sup>9</sup> *Khair-ul- Majalis* ( Majlis- 3 ), op.cit., p. 19.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

her weeping, she told him that she missed her son. Moved by her grief, the Maulana asked her whether she would be accepted back by her husband if set free. She replied in affirmative. When it was still dark the Maulana went in the direction of her village. The Maulana extended her humble service by escorting her up to *shamsi hauz*.

Sheikh Nizamuddin used to comment on this episode that from the point of view of Muslim canon law, the Maulana could be accused of a betting apostasy. But his association with Sheikh Jalaluddin Tabriz (a Suhrawardi saint) during his early days, had infused humanism in him. Therefore, he preferred humanism to *sharia*.<sup>12</sup>

Another episode relates to Sufi saints occurred in Gujarat. A *faqir* and a *diwan* two humble God fearing persons shared together a room. Each morning the *faqir* used to walk down to the *shamsi hauz* for ablution. The guard was friendly and respectful to him so he found no problem in getting enough water for the purpose. On the other hand, women were not allowed to fetch water<sup>13</sup> from the *hauz* by the guard. The latter, even prevented them from approaching the stair case of the *hauz*. An old woman pleaded the *faqir* to fetch her pitcher, the *faqir* happily agreed to do so.<sup>14</sup> The other women who were present there made a similar request and the *faqir* obliged them all.

In the end he returned back to his room to find his partner still asleep. When he asked him to wake up and quickly get ready for *namaz* as little time was left, the *diwan* gave him a small sermon. He remarked that service to the needy is a person's primary duty. Filling the pitchers with water and helping women was more meaningful than simply praying to God.<sup>15</sup> The Sufis thus encouraged their disciples to serve humanity.

Sheikh Fariduddin Ganj-i-Shakar, and his chief spiritual successor Sheikh Nizamuddin considered personal piety of man and woman as the criterion to judge their worth as well as superiority. They had great respect and affection for religious minded ladies. Sheikh Fariduddin Ganj-i-Shakar was deeply impressed by the piety of a lady of Indraprastha.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> *Fawaid-ul- Fuad*, op. cit., p. 165.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p.176.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22.

The Sheikh also had great respect for his mother because of her spiritual caliber.<sup>17</sup> The maid servant of Sheikh Jamaluddin of Hansi was given by the sheikh the title of *ummul mominin* (mother of the Muslims) on account of her piety.<sup>18</sup>

The Sheikhs had liberal attitude towards the inhuman institutions of slavery: once *qazi* Sharfuddin, the grandson of *qazi* Hamiduddin of Nagaur, decided to leave Nagaur in order to visit Sheikh Ganj-i-Shakar, his *pir* at Ajodhan. He had purchased a youthful slave girl for one hundred *tankas*. She cooked victuals and handed them wrapped in a piece of cloth to her master for the sheikh as gift from her. At Ajodhan, the *qazi* presented her gift to the sheikh. At once, the Sheikh prayed for her freedom from slavery. The *qazi* thought that his *pir's* prayers were always answered by God and she would gain freedom. Therefore he thought it was better for him to sell her immediately so that he can be saved from monetary loss. Later, he thought that if he granted her freedom himself, his *pir* would be happy with him. He again went to his *pir* and informed him about his decision. The latter was filled with joy.<sup>19</sup>

One of the chief concerns of the Sufis was to ameliorate the lot of poor and oppressed especially the women. Shams, a poor man of Sunnam was in a great financial trouble and found it hard to support himself and his mother. Desperately he pleaded Baba Farid to pray for his welfare. The latter was moved by his pitiable condition. It was through Baba Farid's prayers that Shams succeeded in securing a job in the services of Bughra Khan.<sup>20</sup>

Another disciple of Baba Farid, had many daughters and was finding it hard to make both the ends meet. He faced great problems in getting his daughter married. He finally prayed Baba Farid to provide him some help. Baba asked the grandson of Zafar Khan to make necessary arrangements for the marriage.<sup>21</sup>

Like his spiritual preceptor (Sheikh Faridudddin Ganj-i-Shakar), Sheikh Nizamuddin Auliya had great sympathy with women. His devout disciples emulated him in sympathizing with men and women equally if they were found in distress.

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<sup>17</sup> Dehlavi Sheikh Abdul Haqq Muhaddis, *Akhbar-ul- Akhyar*, Muhtaba-i- Delhi, 1332 A. H./ 1914 A.D. p. 294.

<sup>18</sup> Mir Khurd, *Siyar-ul- Auliya*, M.S.S. Folio. 95-a, Collection Sulaiman, 609/6, Maulana Azad Library, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, A.H. 1302, p. 183.

<sup>19</sup> *Fawa'id-ul- Fuad*, op. cit., pp. 189-90.

<sup>20</sup> *Fawa'id-ul- Fuad*, op.cit., pp. 127-28; Sheikh Jamali, *Siyar-ul- Arifin*, M.S.S., Habibganj collection, 22/11, Maulana Azad Library, A.M.U. Aligarh, folios. 55 a & 55 b; K. A. Nizami, *The Life and Times of Fariduddin Ganj-i- Shakar*, op. cit., p. 51.

<sup>21</sup> *Khair-ul- Majalis*, (Majlis- 25), op. cit., p. 87; K. A. Nizami, *The Life and Times of Fariduddin Ganj-i- Shakar*, op.cit., p. 112.

Once Amir Hasan Sijzi, his *murid* and the leading Persian poet, was in Deogiri (Deccan) where one of his servants Malik Atique bought a baby girl for five *tankas*. At the time of departure for Delhi, the parents of the girl came with ten *tankas* and requested Atique to accept the amount and return their child to them as they could not part with her easily. As Hasan Sijzi found them in grief and desperation, he said to his servant that he would like to buy the girl for ten *tankas* and then paid him the amount. Having bought the girl, he restored her to the parents, saying that they could take home the girl and money both. On his return to Delhi, he visited his *pir* in his *Khanqah* and related the whole story to him. The Sheikh was so happy that he took off his cap and placed it on the head of Hasan Sijzi. It was a way of appreciating the noble deed done by his disciple.<sup>22</sup>

This shows that the Sufi saints were full of compassion. In this case the girl was a non Muslim but the Sheikh helped her without any priority or discrimination of caste, colour or creed.

On another occasion, when the Sheikh saw a woman drawing water from a well near the bank of the river Yamuna, he came to her and asked, “Why do you trouble yourself by drawing water from the well when the river is so near”? She replied: “What should I do? My husband is a poor man, we do not have enough to eat. Since the Yamuna water (being digestive) makes us hungry soon, we drink the well water instead.” Moved by her plight, the sheikh taking pity on her, said to his personal attendant, “Lala! The woman in Ghiyaspur is seen that she does not drink the Yamuna water out of the fear that it makes one hungry soon. You enquire from her as to how much she needs for her family members and then maintenance allowance should be fixed for her.” This was done accordingly.

In religious matters more rigorous life was prescribed for men than women. Once Maulana Jamaluddin Nasrat Khani and Maulana Sharfuddin visited Sheikh Nasiruddin Chirag Dehlavi. The Sheikh told them that if a man kept fast during the month of *ramzan* and offered *namaz* at night he did whatever a widow could do and there was nothing special in it.<sup>23</sup> It means that men were expected to do more than simply keeping fast and offering *namaz* which were the minimum requirements even for women.

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<sup>22</sup> *Fawaaid-ul- Fuad*, op. cit., p. 202.

<sup>23</sup> *Khair-ul- Majalis* ( Majlis- 17), op. cit., p. 68.

At other hand the Sufis regarded women as means of illusion in this world, and the cause to delude people from the right path. The Sufis advised, that in order to escape from the clutches of world one should follow the right path and lead a pious life.

The presence of females in congregational prayers at the mosque was prevalent. However they were subjected to certain rules and regulations. The arrangement of rows in congregational prayers was such that the *imam* stood at the head of the successive rows of males which was followed by that of children, eunuchs and finally women.

During *namaz* if the *imam* forgot any ritual, the males diverted his attention by chanting *subhan Allah* (God be praised).<sup>24</sup> While the females were supposed to express in a different way.<sup>25</sup> If they noticed a fault in the prayers they were expected to clap the knuckles of one hand on the palm of the other to remind the erring priest.<sup>26</sup> It shows that women were not allowed to speak in the congregation in order to avoid unnecessarily attracting the attention of men by their voice. They were deliberately placed in the rear so that they could leave earlier than others. Even during prayers precaution was taken so that people were not distracted by seeing the posterior aspect of women before them. The purpose of all this was to instill religious atmosphere during religious congregations which could have been otherwise spoiled by the presence of women and unruly element among men.

Apart from their religious impact on people, the Sufi saints also helped them by bringing conciliation, reunions and in overcoming their miseries and longings. Through their blessings they fulfilled the wishes of the people. They tried to prevent the people from inhuman acts and made efforts to divert their energies to a better life. The case of Prince Mohammad, the eldest son of Sultan Balban illustrates these facts.

The prince had married charming and accomplished daughter of Sultan Ruknuddin Ibrahim. He loved her passionately for her beauty and virtues.<sup>27</sup> Once when the royal couple was at Multan, an altercation arose between them and in a fit of intoxicated fury prince Mohammad divorced his beloved wife. Later when the effect of wine was over, he realized his folly of losing his wife. Unable to bear the pangs of

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<sup>24</sup> *Fawaid-ul- Fuad*, op. cit., p. 95.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> *Siyar-ul- Arifin*, p. 135, Matba-i- Rizvi, Delhi, 1311 A.H; *Siyar-ul Arifin* , M.S.S., op. cit., folios, 84 a - 84 b.

separation of his beloved wife he sought the advice of *ulema* to devise ways and means for a reunion.<sup>28</sup> The *ulema* advised him the procedure of *halala* that the princess should marry another person and when that person would voluntarily divorce her, she would be able to remarry her former husband.<sup>29</sup>

The prince was unnerved by this elaborate procedure, for he disliked the idea of giving his divorced wife to a stranger in marriage and was afraid of public mockery.<sup>30</sup> Qazi Ashiruddin Khwarizmi then proposed a better and quicker method which ultimately brought him the wrath of god as well as of the prince.<sup>31</sup> He proposed to arrange remarriage of the princess to Sheikh Sharfuddin Arif who being a pious man would readily agree to oblige and help in fulfilling the plan.<sup>32</sup>

But the Sheikh refused to agree because of his wife's reluctance. The *qazi* was perturbed and the prince was infuriated to the extent of killing the *qazi* and the Sheikh to reclaim his wife. But before he would take such a drastic measure he encountered a severe Mongol invasion in which he was killed.<sup>33</sup>

The frantic love of the prince for his consort impelled him to think in terms of killing the *qazi* and the Sheikh but the latter's mystic vision turned down the plan. Sheikh Sharfuddin Arif was an counted husband and did not hurt the sentiments of his wife to oblige the prince.<sup>34</sup>

Similarly an oil merchant was separated from his wife due to loot and plunder in the city of Ajodhan. He frantically searched her but met no success. Ultimately he went to Baba Farid and narrated his tale of woe.<sup>35</sup> Baba Farid after listening to his misery offered him food because of his separation from his beloved wife.<sup>36</sup> For three days he stayed with Baba Farid as a guest. On the third day a writer came to the Sheikh offering him variety of clothes and a woman to seek Baba Farid's prayer for the restoration of his property.<sup>37</sup> The Sheikh offered this woman to the doleful oil dealer but he refused to accept her saying that this would not compensate his longing for his lost wife. Later on at Baba Farid's instance he accompanied the woman to his

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<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> *Siyar-ul- Arifin*, op. cit., p. 135; *Siyar-ul Arifin* , M.S.S., op. cit., folios, 84 a - 84 b.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, *History of Sufism in India*, Vol. I., op. cit., pp. 202-203.

<sup>34</sup> *Siyar-ul- Arifin*, op. cit., pp. 135-36.

<sup>35</sup> *Khair-ul-Majalis* ( Majlis- 75 ), op.cit., pp. 236-238.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p.237.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

village and was surprised to find that the proposed woman was actually his lost wife. The oil dealer became extremely happy.<sup>38</sup>

The blessings of the Sufi saints made the right man happy while the wrong one was punished. The activities of the Sufis were not only restricted to religion alone but extended to all spheres. Those who came to them for redressal of their grievances, were generally pacified. An issueless couple visited Sheikh Sharfuddin and expressed their keen desire to have a child.<sup>39</sup> The Sheikh gave them two dates one was to be eaten by the husband and the other by the wife. The couple ate it and was blessed with a son.<sup>40</sup>

The widows also got allowance from Sheikh Nizamuddin Auliya if they were left without any financial support. On the death of Sheikh Badruddin Ishaq, the Khalifa and son in law of Sheikh Fariduddin Ganj-i- Shakar, his widow and two sons were invited to Delhi and the responsibility of their education and maintenance were taken up by the Sheikh.

As a matter of fact Sheikh Nizamuddin Auliya gave priority to the service of mankind irrespective of creed or gender discrimination, a meritorious work from the point of his religion. He used to say that there were two types of divine worship *taf-i-lazmi* (compulsory) and *taf-i-mufadi* (voluntary). The former fits the individual who performs it and this includes five time prayers, fasting, etc. while the latter was done for the good of other people and it included the distribution of food or rendering other type of assistance to people. The *taf-i-mufadi* had greater religious merit than the *taf-i-lazmi* for him.<sup>41</sup>

Like Sheikh Nizamuddin, his chief successor, Sheikh Nasiruddin Chiragh of Delhi treated men and women on an equal footing. If he was impressed by someone's sincerity in religion, he gave him his own prayer carpet. Both men and women received this favour from him. Before his death, he is reported to have distributed the relics that he possessed among four disciples one of whom was a woman. His chief disciple, Saiyyid Muhammad Gesudaraz, tells us that he distributed his spiritual *wilayat* among four disciples, one of whom happened to be a lady. As it was a

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<sup>38</sup> *Khair-ul- Majalis*, ( Majlis- 75 ), op. cit., pp. 236-37; *Khair-ul- Majalis*, Introduction , p. 13. The religion of the oil merchant is not mentioned whereas *Siyar-ul- Arifin* claims that he was a Muslim.

<sup>39</sup> *Siyar-ul- Arifin*, op. cit., p. 84; *Siyar -ul- Arifin*, M.S.S., op. cit., folio. 83 a.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> The Persian text terms it, as *taat-i- mutaadi* and *taat-i- lazmi*. See *Fawaaid-ul- Fuad*, op. cit., pp.13-14.



departure from the well established norm in the *chishti silsila*. Neither Gesudaraz nor any other Sufi writer mentions her name or her role after the passing away of his *pir*.

Lastly, it seems worthwhile to peruse the relationship of the *chishti* Sufi with their wives. The wives seem to have been treated by all representative Sufis regardless of their *silsilas* as life partners. They were also of the view that wife being a life partner would not be enrolled by her Sufi husband as his *murid*, because she would not behave like one who completely acquiesces into the authority of his *pir*.

It may also be recalled, that the leading *chishti* Sufis of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries led a simple and austere life even if there was a flow of *futuh* (unsolicited gift ) in cash and kind. The *futuh* was distributed among the poor and other deserving persons while the Sheikh and his family members got very little out of it for themselves. The wives and children of Sheikh Fariduddin Ganj-i- Shakar often faced starvation, when there was no *futuh* from any quarter.<sup>42</sup> The wife of Sheikh Hamiduddin Nagauri spun cloth for herself and her husband. She lived like the wife of a poor peasant of Rajputana. Her husband cultivated land and lived on the meager earnings. In fact, wives of the Sufis adapted themselves to the austerities; no conflict is reported to have ever taken place between them over any issue. Poverty and austerity were considered the requisites of piety.

### **Renowned Sufi Ladies of the Period:**

Women continued to play an important role in the movement both as Sufis and as the mothers of leading Sufis. Among these mentionworthy are Bibi Zulaikha, Bibi Auliya, Bibi Qarsum Masuma, Bibi Sara, Bibi Raasti, Bibi Jamal, Bibi Fatima Sam, Bibi Raani and Khadiji.

Sheikh Nizamuddin Auliya used to say: “When a lion emerges from a forest, nobody asks about its gender. The progeny of Adam should adopt piety and obedience to God whether they are men or women.”<sup>43</sup> During the period under review references are found of a number of ladies who were known for their piety and religious outlook. Some of them had even acquired spiritual powers and could perform acts of miracles.

### **Bibi Zulaikha:**

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<sup>42</sup> *The Life and Times of Sheikh Fariduddin Ganj-i- Shakar*, op.cit., pp. 39-40.

<sup>43</sup> *Akhbar-ul- Akhyar*, op.cit., p. 295.

Bibi Zulaikha was the mother of Sheikh Nizamuddin Auliya. She was renowned for her piety and religious proclivity. She trusted her prayers and always resorted upon the mercy of God.<sup>44</sup> The Sheikh was a minor, when his father passed away. It was his mother Bibi Zulaikha brought him up. She was his first teacher and she kindled the spark of divine love in him. Sheikh Nizamuddin sought solace from her in hours of distress.

The Sheikh was often asked by people to solve their spiritual and material problems. On one occasion there was a drought in Delhi. Everyone fervently prayed for rain and the Sheikh was asked to do likewise. He pulled a yarn from a garment worn by his mother and held it in his hand while praying. Rain showers began to pour.

Sheikh Nizamuddin passed the early days of his life in extreme poverty. Though prices of commodities were reasonable, the Sheikh had no money to afford daily needs. His mother and sister also faces similar condition. They passed days and nights continuously without meal. These trying moments did not dissuade him from the path that he had chosen for himself. Sheikh Nizamuddin relates the nature of his mother was such that when there was no food in the house; she would say that they were the guest of God that day and people gifted grain.<sup>45</sup> *Siyar-ul-Auliya* records the poverty faced by Sheikh Nizamuddin Auliya and his companions.

Once her female servant left, making things difficult. She prayed to God for her return, saying that she would not place her *daman* (veil) on her head till God listened to her woes.<sup>46</sup> She wailed and waited for a divine miracle surprisingly enough, the whereabouts of the maid was traced and the very next day she returned back to resume her services.<sup>47</sup>

Paying tributes to his mother, Sheikh Nizamuddin Auliya remarked that there was a unique relation between her and God because God always fulfilled her desires and wishes. She possessed power of intuition foreseeing the future in her dreams.<sup>48</sup> It was by virtue of her intuition that she prophesied that one day her son would earn great fame and honour as a saint.

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<sup>44</sup> *Siyar-ul- Auliya*, M.S.S., op. cit., folio., 75 b; *Akhbar-ul- Akhyar*, op.cit., p. 297.

<sup>45</sup> *Akhbar-ul- Akhyar*, op.cit., p. 297; Nizami, K.A., *Some Aspects of Religion and Politics in India During Thirteenth Century*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2002, p.210.

<sup>46</sup> *Siyar-ul- Auliya*, M. S.S., op.cit., folio. 76 a.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

Her prayers were realized after demise.<sup>49</sup> At the time of her death, Sheikh Nizamuddin Auliya was very much disturbed, she took his right hand into hers and called to the almighty “I am handing him over to you.”<sup>50</sup>

These events demonstrate Bibi Zulaikha’s spiritual status. Whenever she desired anything, or faced any crisis she recited *darood* (eulogy, special praises of Prophet) five hundred times in prayer and her needs were fulfilled.<sup>51</sup> He had great reverence for her. After her demise he visited her tomb regularly and recited *fatiha*, *darood* and prayers for the peace of her soul, whenever any problem cropped up, he visited his mothers tomb, prayed by her side, and within few days he used to get relief.<sup>52</sup>

Sultan Qutbuddin Mubarak Shah Khalji disturbed the routine of Sheikh Nizamuddin Auliya by asking him to come and pray in the royal mosque.<sup>53</sup> Sheikh Nizamuddin Auliya refused to abide by the royal orders as he preferred to offer his prayers in the mosque, near his house. This enraged the Sultan who again ordered Sheikh Nizamuddin Auliya along with others to come and pay obeisance to him on every first day of the new moon.<sup>54</sup> This placed Sheikh Nizamuddin Auliya in a fix because it clashed with his regular visit to his mother’s grave.<sup>55</sup> Sitting by the side of his mother’s grave, he prayed for being rescued from the ruler.<sup>56</sup> His prayers were answered when there occurred a sudden political turmoil, which resulted in assassination of Sultan Qutubuddin Mubarak Shah Khalji.<sup>57</sup>

These events demonstrate the mystic power which both the mother and the son possessed. They always turned to god for his mercy in times of crisis.

Bibi Zulaikha was a remarkable lady, though she was born with a silver spoon in her mouth, when circumstances forced her to face hardships; she bore with patience and fortitude the ravages of misfortune. Instead of complaining or breaking down inured to suffering, became very pious and resigned to the will of God. She moulded the thoughts and personality of her son and illustrated through her own example that

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<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> *Akhbar-ul- Akhyar*, op.cit., p. 298.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 297; *Siyar-ul- Auliya*, M.S.S., op. cit., folio. 76 a.

<sup>52</sup> *Siyar-ul- Auliya*, M.S.S., op.cit., folio. 76 a; *History of Sufism in India*, Vol. I, op. cit., p. 402.

<sup>53</sup> *Akhbar-ul- Akhyar*, op.cit., p. 297.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 298.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

endurance and moral excellence were always within one's reach, even in the midst of adversities. Her only obsession in life was to inculcate best education to her son.

Unending days of deprivation, continuous fasting and endless struggle to keep body and soul together shattered her health quickly and she received a call from the almighty. She did not live to see her son reach the pinnacle of religious glory when he would, instead of himself being a "guest of God", play host to many every day. She prophesied looking at the feet of her son, "Nizamuddin, I see signs of a bright future in you. You will be a man of destiny someday". One day, the young Nizamuddin asked, "But when will this happen?" To this Bibi Zulaikha replied with a sense of premonition, "When I am dead."<sup>58</sup>

The mother had an unflinching faith in God. While praying, she would go into a state of direct communion with Him. The Sheikh used to say that her prayers were always answered by God in no time. Every month, on the day of the sighting of the new moon, the Sheikh would offer his respect to her by placing his head on her feet. In her last month when he was lying at her feet, Bibi asked Nizam, "At whose feet will you place your head the next time?" Knowing that the time for separation had come, he burst into tears. "To whose care will you entrust me?" he asked her. The mother replied, "I will tell you tomorrow." She then directed him to go and sleep at the house of Sheikh Najib-ud- din. In the small of the morning the maid servant came rushing and said that his mother had called him. Nizamuddin hurried to the house. "Where is your right hand?" asked his dying mother. He stretched out his head, which she held in hers and uttered her last sentence, "O God! I entrust him to thee". So saying, she breathed her last. According to the Sheikh, if she had left the house laden with wealth in the form of gold and jewels he would not have been as consoled and happy as he felt because of what she said while dying. Throughout his life, his bereaved heart would always feel that he was under the care and protection of the Almighty.<sup>59</sup>

Bibi Zulaikha lies buried a mile away from the Qutb Minar in a small village known as Udhchini, it was practice of the Sheikh Nizamuddin Auliya throughout his

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<sup>58</sup> *Siyar-ul- Auliya*, M.S.S. op. cit., folio. 76 a.

<sup>59</sup> Jafri Saiyid Zaheer Husain, *The Islamic Path: Sufism, Society and Politics in India*, Rainbow Publishers, New Delhi, p. 284.

life that whenever he had a problem, he visited the grave of his mother and prayed there.<sup>60</sup>

Likewise the annual celebrations of the death anniversaries are performed in the month of July, in the same fashion as these are conducted at the *dargahs* of the male Sufis. Recitation of *fatiha*, *ghusl-i- mazar* (the washing of the graves), the offering of sandal wood paste and rose petals and *sama* ( music) with instruments or the distribution of *tabarukat* are the ritual ceremonies that are performed at the *dargahs*. Again tying a thread, which is a usual practice at any *dargah*, is equally observed at this place.<sup>61</sup>

The only point of distinction is that at this *dargah* Wednesdays, not Thursday are considered to be auspicious for visiting. This may be because the great sheikh himself perhaps used to visit here on Wednesday or maybe it is because she was born on a Wednesday.<sup>62</sup>

### **Bibi Auliya:**

According to Sheikh Abdul Haqq, Bibi Auliya lived at the time of Sultan Mohammad Tughluq, who was a great devotee. She was a gentle and kind hearted lady.<sup>63</sup> The Sultan held her in great esteem. Sufis also had deep regards for her. This was due to her piety and virtues she became a cherished personage.<sup>64</sup> She had a number of children who owed their learning to Sufi doctrines to their mother. Foremost Among them was Sheikh Ahmad.<sup>65</sup> She led a saintly and withdrawn life, which involved being in a constant state of near starvation. Her sons and grandsons apparently also became saints.<sup>66</sup>

### **Bibi Qarsum Masuma:**

The Status of mother has always been quite exalted and the Sufis also held their mothers in great esteem. Sheikh Nizamuddin Auliya once remarked that parents mould the destiny of their children. He remarked in the context of Sheikh Farid's

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<sup>60</sup> *Siyar-ul-Auliya*, op. cit., p. 150; *Siyar-ul- Auliya*, M.S.S., folio., 76 a.

<sup>61</sup> *The Islamic Path: Sufism, Society and Politics in India*, op. cit., p. 285.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> *Akhbar-ul- Akhyar*, op.cit., p. 298; *History of Sufism in India*, Vol. I., op.cit., p.403.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>66</sup> *Fawaid-ul- fuad*, p. 121; *The Life and Times of Sheikh Fariduddin Ganj-i- Shakar*, op.cit., p.15.

mother: 'a son is strongly influenced by the piety of his parents'.<sup>67</sup> He perhaps had in his mind the influence of his own mother also. Thus not only did the mother of Sufi saints alone but Sufi woman in general tried to transform the lives of people whom they looked upon as their own children.

Bibi Qarsum, the mother of Baba Farid, was distinguished for her generous qualities and pious nature. She used to devote all her energies in the prayer of God.<sup>68</sup> Her devotion and love for God can be assessed from the following anecdote.

She was exceedingly pious woman who prayed at night. Once she was engrossed in her prayers, a thief entering the house glanced at the praying woman and was instantly blinded before he could commit theft.<sup>69</sup> The thief implored the Sheikh's mother to restore his eye sight and vowed to refrain from the evil act in future. Thus by her grace not only was their eye sight but they were also enlightened to embrace Islam.<sup>70</sup> Bibi Qarsum's kindness became a source of their new life. After few days a stranger came along with his wife and children to meet her. On enquiring the man said that he had brought his family to be initiated into Islam and receive her blessings for a good life.<sup>71</sup> The stranger was no one else but one of the thieves who had earlier broken into her house. But now he was changed man in search of mystic bliss, the seeds of which were sown in him by Bibi Qarsum, the mother of Baba Farid.

The anecdote related to the death of Baba Farid's mother is strange. He held his mother in great esteem. When Baba Farid settled at Ajodhan he asked his brother, Sheikh Najibuddin Mutwakkil to bring his mother who was then living at either Hansi or Delhi, to Ajodhan<sup>72</sup> to live with him. The latter went to comply the orders immediately. On the way Bibi Qarsum felt thirsty and asked for some water. Sheikh Najibuddin Mutwakkil went to fetch water for her, leaving her under a tree in the desert all alone. On his return his mother was nowhere to be seen and desperate search failed to find any trace of her.<sup>73</sup> Dejected he returned back and the tragedy was related to Baba Farid and the latter appropriately had prayers said and food distributed to the poor for the repose of his mother's soul.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> *Akhbar-ul- Akhyar*, pp. 296-297.

<sup>69</sup> *Fawa'id-ul- Fuad*, op.cit., pp. 121-122.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*; *History of Sufism in India*, Vol.I., op.cit., p. 138-139; *The Life and Times of Sheikh Fariduddin Ganj-i- Shakar*, op.cit., p. 15.

<sup>71</sup> *Siyar-ul- Arifin*, M.S.S., op. cit., folios. 55 a - 55 b.

<sup>72</sup> *Akhbar-ul- Akhyar*, op. cit., p. 297.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

After some time Sheikh Najibuddin again passed along the same route, he thought of enquiring there about his mother in the nearby village. While searching for her and near the spot where he had stopped, he found some human bones lying in the desert. Presuming them to be those of his dead mother,<sup>75</sup> who had fallen prey to a lion or some other beast, the Sheikh collected them in a bag and took them to Ajodhan. When he came to Baba Farid and narrated it in detail, he was surprised to see that when Baba Farid opened the bag on his prayer carpet, there was no trace of bones in it.<sup>76</sup>

### **Bibi Sharifa:**

One of the daughters of Sheikh Fariduddin Ganj-i- Shakar, Bibi Sharifa, was held in high esteem by him for her religiosity. She became widow in her early youth and did not marry again. She rather devoted herself to religion in such a way that the saint remarked: had it been permitted to give Khilafatnama ( grant of authority by a master Sufi to his disciple to enroll *murids* in the *silsilah* ) of the Sheikh and his *sajjada* (spiritual heir) to a woman, I would have given them to Bibi Sharifa.<sup>77</sup> Further he said: “If other women had been like her, woman would have taken precedence over men.”<sup>78</sup> Thus she devoted all her energies in devotion to God. Her faith in prayers was immense. If Khilafat or delegation of spiritual authority was allowed to women, perhaps Bibi Sharifa was fully qualified for it. She would have no doubt to become the *sajjadah* (successor). About the pious life of Bibi Sharifa it was remarked that if all women followed her mode of living, it would unquestionably enhance the status of women with respect to men.<sup>79</sup>

### **Bibi Sara:**

Bibi Sara was the mother of Sheikh Nizamuddin Abul Muid, who was known for genial and religious bent of mind.<sup>80</sup> She observed strict *purdah* and it was well

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<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> *Fawaid-ul- Fuad*, op.cit., p. 122-123., *History of Sufism in India*, vol.I., op.cit., p. 401; *The Life and Times of Fariduddin Ganj-i- Shakar*, op.cit., p. 37.

<sup>77</sup> *The Life and Times of Fariduddin Ganj-i- Shakar*, op.cit., p. 65.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>79</sup> *Siyar-ul- Arifin*, M.S.S., op.cit., folio. 102 a.

<sup>80</sup> *Akhbar-ul- Akhyar*, op. cit., p. 294.

known that no male had ever seen her in her private life.<sup>81</sup> Devoted to prayers and religious pursuits she was believed to have possessed miraculous mystic power. Once it did not rain in Delhi for long and the inhabitants of that place prayed to God for relief. But there was no respite. So the Sheikh took the help of his mother and holding her *daman* prayed to the almighty to send rain.<sup>82</sup> In no time a miracle happened. There were sudden showers of rain which provided relief to the agony of the people of Delhi.<sup>83</sup>

### **Bibi Raasti:**

Bibi Raasti was the wife of Sheikh Sadruddin Arif and mother of Sheikh Ruknuddin Abdul Fath. She was a pious and religious minded woman.<sup>84</sup> She used to read the whole Quran daily.<sup>85</sup> Her strong faith in Sufi doctrines incited her to become the disciple of Sheikh Bahauddin Zakariya.<sup>86</sup> Once when she was pregnant she visited the Sheikh who treated her in an extraordinary manner. Bibi Raasti was quite surprised at his behavior and enquired about the cause of it. The Sheikh explained to her that it was a humble tribute to her because she was going to be the mother of a great saint too.<sup>87</sup>

### **Bibi Jamal:**

Bibi Jamal, the daughter of Sheikh Moinuddin Chishti led a life in pursuit of Sufi doctrines but other details about her are not available.

Another lady who deserves mention is the mother of Sheikh Hamiduddin Nagauri. She was a pious woman. She was versed in the art of astrology. While Sheikh Hamiduddin was still in her womb, she prophesied that the child would earn great fame in life and would be born posthumously.

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<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 295.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 294.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>84</sup> *Siyar-ul-Arifin*, M.S.S. op. cit., folio. 117 a.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>87</sup> *Siyar-ul-Arifin*, M.S.S. op. cit., folio. 117 a ; *History of Sufism in India*, Vol.I., op.cit., p. 210.



## **Bibi Fatima Saam:**

In the tradition of Sufis, Bibi Fatima was a Sufi lady who was acclaimed in the circle of early *chistis*. Baba Farid (d. 1265 A.D.) rated her prayers and devotion, equal to the prayers of the ten *kamil* (perfect) male Sufis. Sheikh Nizamudddin Auliya, who was a junior contemporary shared affectionate camaraderie with her. Even after her death, the Sheikh used to visit her *dargah* for meditation and prayers. Gesu Daraz of Gulbarga acknowledged her with all reverence and respect in his *Malfuzat*. Likewise, Nasiruddin Chiragh narrates miraculous anecdote about her.

Due to her generosity and religious aptitude Bibi Fatima occupied a unique status among the women of her age. Her virtues, deep love for God and helping nature enabled her to acquire a respectable place in the heart of Sufi saints.<sup>88</sup> Baba Farid respected her and considered her a male in the garb of a female.<sup>89</sup> It was by virtue of her outstanding qualities of piety, courage, perseverance that Sheikh Najibuddin Mutwakkil recognized her mystical prowess.

He remarked, that just as in a forest the appearance of either a lion or a lioness terrifies every one and creates an atmosphere of terror.<sup>90</sup> Similarly in the sufistic order mystical experience does not distinguish a male from a female, both command equal respect.<sup>91</sup>

Baba Farid frequently referred to the piety and sanctity of Bibi Fatima Saam. She used to consider Baba and Najibuddin as her own brothers. Little else is known about her except that she would say (according to Sheikh Abdul Haq Dehlavi), that feeding the hungry and giving water to the thirsty was more meritorious than hundreds of *namaz* and many days spent in fasting.<sup>92</sup>

Sheikh Najibuddin Mutwakkil had great regard for her<sup>93</sup> chiefly because of her generosity. Once it so happened that some guests arrived at Sheikh Najibuddin's house he had nothing to offer them to eat. The Sheikh had himself gone to bed without a morsel that day. However after waking up, the Sheikh thought of selling his wife's *dupatta* but it was too torn to fetch any money. In this state of helplessness the Sufi saint was in great distress, but Bibi Fatima Saam at once came to his rescue. She

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<sup>88</sup> *Akhbar-ul- Akhyar*, op. cit., p. 295.

<sup>89</sup> *Akhbar-ul- Akhyar*, op. cit., p. 295.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>92</sup> *Akhbar-ul- Akhyar*, op. cit., p. 296.

<sup>93</sup> *Fawaid-ul- Fuad*, op.cit., p. 245.

sent him some bread that she had earned by *halal way* (hard work).<sup>94</sup> She expressed her sisterly affection for him, especially in times of crisis.<sup>95</sup>

Both Sheikh Najibuddin and Baba Farid were much impressed by her. Even after her death they paid their reverence by visiting her tomb regularly.<sup>96</sup> Besides being a generous and God fearing lady Bibi Fatima Saam was an accomplished poetess.<sup>97</sup> The word *Shaira* is well applicable to her. Bibi Fatima understood the real meaning of life and completely dedicated herself to the Almighty and also the service of humanity. Mohammad Gesudaraz related an anecdote which throws light upon her humble and dedicated life.<sup>98</sup>

A mysterious dream appeared to a man after the death of Bibi Fatima Saam. He saw that when she was on her way to God, an angel stopped her and enquired her identity.<sup>99</sup> Infuriated at her inquiry she vowed never to enter the abode of God till such time as God himself summoned her.<sup>100</sup> After some time Prophet's wife, Bibi Khadija and his daughter Bibi Fatima Zehra<sup>101</sup> came and asked her to accompany them to the abode of God. She fell at their feet but declined to carry out the order.

Both of them expressed surprise that in the past that they had never been pressed like this by the Almighty to go and entrust someone to accompany them to him.<sup>102</sup> Bibi Fatima felt sorry for her obduracy but remained undeterred in her resolve.

A voice was then heard saying that God himself was summoning her.<sup>103</sup> She to the utter surprise refused the invitation, expressing her helplessness to obey the divine command. She was among those who disobeyed the command of God and with these words her soul entered into her earthly grave.<sup>104</sup> Such was the selfless love which Bibi Fatima Saam had for God and for her fellow beings.

The very fact is that the *chishti* saints in the Fourteenth Century were highly inspired and appreciative of her piety, prayers and meditations, indicated that her *dargah* had become a centre of veneration and pilgrimage. Sheikh Nizamuddin Auliya used to go to her tomb to offer prayers and obtain spiritual satisfaction.

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<sup>94</sup> *Siyar-ul- Arifin*, M.S.S. op.cit., folios. 134 a - 134 b.

<sup>95</sup> *Fawaaid-ul- Fuad*, op.cit., p. 245; *Akhbar-ul- Akhyar*, p. 295.

<sup>96</sup> *Akhbar-ul- Akhyar*, op.cit., p. 296.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 296.; *Fawaaid-ul- Fuad*, op.cit., p. 244.

<sup>98</sup> *Akhbar-ul- Akhyar*, op.cit., pp. 295-296.

<sup>99</sup> *Akhbar-ul- Akhyar*, op.cit., pp. 295-296.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*

An anecdote related by the Sheikh illustrates the *chisti* attitude to manual labour and prayer. When the Sheikh visited the tomb of Bibi Saam which was near a pond, a man appeared with a basket filled with *khiyar* (a vegetable resembling a cucumber ) and dropped them near the tank where he performed ablutions and then calmly said his prayers. After finishing them he washed the *khiyars* and then recited three blessings for the Prophet Mohammad. The piety of the man so amazed the Sheikh that he offered him a silver *tanka* but this was refused. The Sheikh asked the man how could he, a lowly paid labourer, refused to accept *futuh* (gift). The man replied that his father also sold vegetables, that he had died when he was young and that his mother was able only to teach him the most elementary rules for moral prayers. When she was dying, she pointed to some money hidden in the thatched roof. Some of it was to be used for her burial, she said the rest, twenty dirhams was the son's share. Like his father he should continue as a vegetable seller and not depend for his living on anything or anyone else.<sup>105</sup>

Bibi Fatima's tomb was in the old Indraprastha; it was a rendezvous for holy men. By the close of the Sixteenth Century it deserted. The memory of Bibi Fatima fell into obscurity and she became known to the local people only as Bibi Saima or Bibi Sham.<sup>106</sup>

We have a very detailed biographical note in *Akhbar-ul-Akhyar* of Sheikh Abdul Haq, which recollects all the earlier anecdotes and references. But at the same time, he says that her tomb was enclosed within ruins and the memory of Bibi Fatima had fallen into obscurity; and during Mughal times her *dargah* was not in the reckoning. He complains about the general apathy of the people to her historical personality. He says that people quite erroneously described her as Bibi Sham or Bibi Saima. Both these names were patently wrong, as she was actually Fatima Saam.

By the Sixteenth Century, the historical importance and the visibility of the remains of the *dargah* had receded into oblivion; it was hardly frequented by people. Even the elite neglected the historical persona of this woman who was highly rated, respected and venerated by early *chishtis* of the stature of Baba Farid and Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya.

The *dargah* of Bibi Fatima Saam is now located in Kaka Nagar, New Delhi and is surrounded by residential colonies. A special effort has to be made to locate

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<sup>105</sup> *History of Sufism in India*, Vol. I., op.cit., p. 402.

<sup>106</sup> *Akhbar-ul- Akhyar*, op. cit., p. 296.

and reach the place. While the *dargah* itself has been completely renovated with lavish use of marble and granite, the structure has nothing to claim that this place belonged to the Thirteenth Century except the *barakah* (the living tradition of the continuing soul). Close to it is a small mosque where prayers are offered Including the Friday prayers. The annual *urs* is celebrated in the month of October by patrons and followers.<sup>107</sup>

### **Bibi Fatimah:**

Sheikh Nasiruddin Chirag-i- Dehli mentions a female Sufi, Bibi Fatima, who constantly fasted. She had a slave girl who worked as a labourer and from these earnings the latter prepared for her lady two cakes of barley each day. These would be placed beside Bibi Fatima's prayer carpet, along with a glass of water, and were the only food she took between fasts. One night after prayer, when she was going to take her meal, she felt that it would be her last night and thought it improper to die with full belly. This prompted her not to have her food and she distributed it to the beggars<sup>108</sup> and did not lose a moment from prayer. She continuously prayed and fasted without sleeping and eating food. Whatever food was brought to her was given to the beggar by her.<sup>109</sup> Thus fasting and praying she died on fortieth night. An angel approached her on that day. She sought permission to pray before giving up her last breath. When she knelt for prayer, bowing her head down, she breathed her last.<sup>110</sup>

Sheikh Nasiruddin concluded the story by saying that Bibi Fatima's life was a true example of the belief that a real Sufi was one who was an *ibnul- waqt*, that is, understood the real value of human life through a constant awareness of its transience.<sup>111</sup>

Like her mistress, the maid of Bibi Fatima also considered misery and sufferings as blessings in disguise. Throughout the day she worked hard earning livelihood by spinning and weaving.<sup>112</sup> In the end she would purchase two cakes of barley. She regularly offered it, along with a glass of water to her mistress. The latter

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<sup>107</sup> *The Islamic Path: Sufism, Society and Politics in India*, op. cit., p. 281.

<sup>108</sup> *Siyar-ul- Arifin*, M.S.S. op. cit., folio. 134 b.; *Khair-ul- Majalis* ( Majlis- 41), op.cit., p. 138.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, folios. 135a - 135 b.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>111</sup> *History of Sufism in India*, Vol.I., op.cit., p. 403.

<sup>112</sup> *Khair-ul- Majalis*, ( Majlis- 41 ), op.cit., p. 138.

gave away her share to the beggars and continued with her prayers and penance without taking any food.<sup>113</sup>

Thus Bibi Fatima could not be swayed by mundane pleasures. Her life was totally dedicated to God and she died while offering prayers to him.

### **Bibi Raani:**

We have references of some ladies who were themselves not very religious minded people. It was through their selfless service and sacrifice that they served God by serving Sufi saints. One such lady was Bibi Raani, the wife of Sayyid Mahmud Kirmani. Bibi Raani was placed in charge of Baba Farid's *jamat khana* where she looked after the welfare of the inmates with great love and tenderness.

Once Maulana Badruddin was crying loudly in an emotional state of mind. Bibi Raani politely asked him to stop crying because she wanted to put *surma* in his eyes. But Maulana Badruddin expressed his helplessness saying that tears were not under his control.<sup>114</sup> This shows that Bibi Raani affectionately took care of the inmates of *jamat khana* for whom she was just like an elder sister.<sup>115</sup> She also extended her humble services to Sheikh Nizamuddin Auliya when he stayed at Ajodhan, she not only washed the sheikh's clothes but also offered him a *chadar* as a gift.<sup>116</sup>

### **Bibi Khadiji:**

The wives of the Sufi saints also played an important role and their influence upon their husbands cannot be undermined. The influence which the wife of Sufi saint, Sheikh Hamiduddin had upon her husband can well be illustrated by the following details. She was a kind hearted religious and a humble woman.

The wife of Sheikh Hamiduddin Nagauri spun cloth for herself and her husband and lived like the wife of a poor peasant at Rajputana. Her husband cultivated land and lived on the small income from it. In fact wives of the Sufis adapted themselves to the style of their husband; no conflict is reported to have ever taken place between them over any issue. Poverty and austerity were considered the

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<sup>113</sup> *Siyar-ul- Arifin*, M.S.S. op.cit., folios. 135a & 135 b; *Khair-ul- Majalis*, op.cit., p.138.

<sup>114</sup> *The Life and Times of Sheikh Fariduddin Ganj-i- Shakar*, op.cit., p. 47.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*

requisites of piety. She led an ideal life looking after the household chores and helping her husband in earning their livelihood by spinning and weaving. In spite of their hard work their earnings were not enough to make both the ends meet. They lived almost on the verge of starvation and penury.

Sultan Iltutmish tried to bestow royal favour on Sheikh Hamiduddin. A governor was sent by him to confer upon Sheikh Hamiduddin, a *jagir* and five hundred silver *tankas*. Sheikh Hamiduddin could not decide whether to accept the gift or not. He consulted his wife and got a satisfactory answer which had a profound impact upon him.

Though driven to this pathetic condition of poverty she was not tempted by the royal offer and politely asked her husband to decline it. Consoling her husband she said that she had spun two sears of yarn which would be enough to provide her a *dupatta* and the Sheikh a loin cloth. She emphasized that royal favour would be impediments in their spiritual pursuit. The Sheikh was visibly moved and impressed by the moral courage and determination of his wife. He admired her honesty and hard work to earn a modest livelihood and refrain from worldly temptations.

Khwaja Qutbuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki's neighbour was one Sharfuddin, who was a green grocer. They were quite intimate and their wives visited each other's homes. Very often Sharfuddin's wife even provided financial help to Khwaja Kaki's family.<sup>117</sup>

Unfortunately, this generous act of her's was undermined by her nagging disposition. Once there occurred a difference of opinion between the two women. During the altercation the green grocer's wife sarcastically remarked that had she abstained from helping them, they would have been reduced to starvation.<sup>118</sup>

After this incident Khwaja Kaki asked his wife never to seek any assistance from their neighbour but to turn to the mercy of God.<sup>119</sup> He told her to recite *bismillah* in times of need which would be enough to provide her bread. This just indicates that God helps his followers silently; on the other hand people boast loudly their act of charity.

There were some women, who were known for their kindness and generosity. They served the Sufi saints with care and devotion. There lived a pious and a hard

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<sup>117</sup> *Siyar-ul- Arifin*, M.S.S., op. cit., folios. 147 a - 147 b.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*

working woman in Ghiyaspur who earned her living by spinning and weaving. With the money she earned, she brought barley flour of which she prepared bread and ate it without salt just to satisfy her hunger. Once it so happened that Sheikh Nizamuddin Auliya and disciples were camping near Ghiyaspur but had nothing to break their fast with.<sup>120</sup>

When the lady heard this, she immediately sent all the flour she had, to the Sheikh, who instructed Kamaluddin Yaqub, one of his disciples to add equal amount of water in it and prepare something for the *faqirs*.<sup>121</sup> Due to the generosity of this woman, the Sufis were able to break their fast with simple porridge of barley.<sup>122</sup>

A similar incident occurred in the life of Khwaja Zikrullah. During the days of *ramzaan*, a woman who had been to Hajj twice,<sup>123</sup> regularly went to pay her respect to Khwaja Zikrullah. She also took along with her a tray full of eatables, carried by a maid,<sup>124</sup> for the Khwaja. She requested the Khwaja to break his fast with the dishes but the Sheikh was on a continuous fast so he ate from it only after that was over.<sup>125</sup> This indicates that perhaps woman had an access to Sufi saints and the food offered to them was not only readily accepted but relished by them. Besides it also indicates that the women were allowed to undertake pilgrimage to Mecca escorted by male companions.

The grandmother of Amir Khurd too was known for her kindness and charitable disposition. She laid a white sheet over Baba Farid's tomb and paid respects to the saint.<sup>126</sup>

The daughters of Baba Farid were also virtuous and religious minded. Syed Mohammad Mubarak Kirmani narrated the virtues and qualities of the three daughters of Baba Farid. The eldest Bibi Masherah observed strict *purdah* and led a pious life. One of his daughters, Bibi Sharifa was held in high esteem by him for her religiosity. She has already been taken in detail under a separate heading. Bibi Fatimah, the youngest daughter of Baba Farid was married to Maulana Badruddin Ishaq.<sup>127</sup> She became a widow quite early and was left with her two sons- Khwaja Mohammad

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<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, folio. 97 b.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>123</sup> *Khair-ul- Majalis* (Majlis- 71 ),op. cit., pp. 232-233.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>126</sup> *The Life and Times of Fariduddin Ganj-i- Shakar*, op.cit., p. 58.

<sup>127</sup> *Siyar-ul- Arifin*, M.S.S., op. cit., folio. 102 a.

Ishaq, and Khwaja Musa. Sheikh Nizamuddin Auliya was much disturbed at the sudden demise of Bibi Fatimah's husband. To console her and provide some relief, he asked Saiyyid Mohammad Kirmani to bring her along with her children to Delhi.<sup>128</sup>

It was not long after Bibi Fatima's arrival in Delhi that rumours began that Sheikh Nizamuddin Auliya wanted to marry her. When Sheikh Nizamuddin heard about this he was deeply shocked. He left for Ajodhan in distress and when he came back to Delhi, Bibi Fatima was already dead.<sup>129</sup>

Remarriage of widows was prevalent yet Sufi women never wished to remarry. The Sufi saints seems to have regarded their mother and sisters with great respect and love. Sheikh Nasiruddin Chiragh Dehlavi had great love and affection for his mother. He never neglected her welfare. On her death he was deeply moved but tried to divert his attention by looking after his two sisiters, Bibi Bua Abdi and Bibi Lahri.<sup>130</sup> Not only did these sisters receive love and respect but also spiritual guidance from the Sheikh. The Sheikh was thus in constant touch with his ancestral home at Awadh and performed sincerely his family duties especially towards his sisters. When both his sisters expired, he brought up their sons- Zainuddin Ali (son of Bibi Bua Abidi ) and Kamaluddin Hamid ( son of Bibi Lahri ).<sup>131</sup> Thus Sheikh Nasiruddin Chiragh Dehlavi treated his mother with reverence and after her demise looked after his sisters. Even when his sisters died he made efforts to bring up his nephew.

Thus it would be a fair derivation to say that Islam never denied opportunities to women to attain spiritual heights merely on the basis of their genetic structure. If they could show the same degree of devotion and commitment as any other devotee, they could as well attain the pious status. Moreover, female mystics were incorporated into *khanqahs* and orders as spiritual succession could not be traced through them. Often they became hermits or lone dervishes and more often than not, lived without the comforts, both spiritual and material, provided by *pirs* and *khanqahs*.

Therefore, it appears to be a distortion of facts that Sufism was by and large an exclusive preserve of men folk only, the women having been denied access to it. Women were not merely devotees, disciples or seekers of blessings; rather some of them were at centre stage to distribute the *barakah*. In a limited empirical way, this fact comes out quite clearly by observing the happenings at the *dargahs* of Bibi

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<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, folio.102 b.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>130</sup> *Khair-ul- Majalis* ( introduction ), pp. 45-46.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*



Fatimah and Bibi Zulaikha. At these two places virtually all the rituals and ceremonies that one can associate with *dargahs* are celebrated still with religious punctuality.

Therefore, it would not be unfair to say that Muslim women who became deeply committed to mysticism and a life of asceticism did so in spite of a lack of encouragement and assistance from their male counterparts and from prevailing Islamic society in general.

Thus women Sufis did receive a lot of veneration in their own life time and after death, bestowed with a reverence reserved only for the Sufis with prayers offered and intercessions sought in their names. *Dargahs* have been built in their memory, which attract pilgrims from different regions. In fact, Muslim mystics, the evidence goes to prove, developed and accepted a sort of cult and sought to establish the belief that these Sufis had acquired intercessory powers. They were projected as God's friends who had a spiritual bonding with God, which could not be served in this life, or in the one thereafter. Naturally, women Sufis also enjoyed this exalted position.

It seems that the ladies during this period were free to pursue a life of religious devotion. They could visit mosques, perform prayers and keep fasts. Some of them even rose high and developed mystic powers. Their piety and generosity no doubt brought them fame and respect and more importantly a closer association with Almighty.

## **Women and Hinduism:**

The position of women in Vedic age was fairly satisfactory in the realm of family religion and public life. Girls were educated; many of them were distinguished poetess which earned them status in the preserve of canonical literature. Landed property could be owned by those who could defend it. Queens reigned independently or as regents. However changes gradually took place in the age of later *samhitas*.<sup>132</sup>

With the advent of Bhakti movement, attitude towards women became very positive, Ramananda opened the doors of spiritual life to women. Kabir also enrolled women disciples. Guru Nanak was also very sympathetic towards women and had high regard for his mother and elder sister. He enrolled female disciples also.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> For details see, Altekar A. S., 'Position of Women in Hindu Civilization' eds. Kumkum Roy, *Women in Early Indian Societies*, Manohar Publishers, New Delhi, 1999, pp. 49-71.

<sup>133</sup> Singh Trilochan, *Guru Nanak*, Delhi, 1969, P. 54.

Bhakti movement also brought the spiritual enfranchisement of women. Redemption was not confined only to males. They made their mark by trespassing the social frame work and being grounded to the grassroots through their communication in their local languages. Akka Mahadevi in Kannad, Molla in Telegu, Janabai in Maharastra And al and Karaikkal Amaiya in Tamil, Mira in Rajasthani and Lalla in Kashmiri <sup>134</sup> are shining examples of women saints of medieval India. There are references to their spiritual love and devotion.

One can say that women enjoyed respectable status, in terms of being acknowledged as having inborn spiritual prowess. They also had a venerated status in family of religious personages. Gender difference in the context of spiritual caliber does not appear to be a hindrance from the foregoing anecdotes and discussion.

By medieval times, the temple achieved great institutional status linking itself closely with the rise of devotional sects. The rise of devotional Bhakti literature of the times too is suggestive of the new feudal class relationships and the corresponding ideology. The evidence referring to the *devadasis* or dancing girls enable the historians to infer that they too had an important position in society of South India. To gauge correctly the status of women in social sphere, a study of the dancing girls, the way the society looked upon them and treated them and the roles assigned them is essential. <sup>135</sup>

*Devadasi* literally meant a slave or a servant of God. In other words, she was meant for the service of the almighty. She was allowed to earn a living by serving God in a temple through the means of music and dance. These girls had to perform such duties as cleaning the temples, lighting the lamps, decorating the temples perhaps and also singing and dancing on festive days and ceremonial occasions. <sup>136</sup>

Sometimes girls were brought from different places of the country and were given employment in the temples as in the case of the Visvesvara temple at Malkapuram where the singers were brought from Kashmir. Apart from these, it is also observed that many women enter into temple service for employment probably for the sake of the shares in temple property and a portion of *prasadamu* of the deity was

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<sup>134</sup> Ramaswamy Vijaya, *Walking Naked*, Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla, 1997, p. 30.

<sup>135</sup> Padma M. B., *The Position of Women in Medieval Karnataka*, Prasaranga, Mansangotri, Mysore, 1993, p. 164.

<sup>136</sup> *The Position of Women in Medieval Karnataka*, op. cit., p. 164.

offered to them in lieu of their services in the temple. A merchant at Elesvaram donated his two granddaughters to the temple.<sup>137</sup>

Epigraphs explain that persons used to offer virgin girls as gifts to the temples in addition to the lands, cows and other material and perhaps the reason for this was their belief that great merit would come to them by giving such donation. For example, an inscription of 974 A.D., speaks of the gift of two girls and twelve cows offered to God.<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> Padma A., *The Socio- Cultural World of Women in Medieval Andhra*, Bharatiya Kala Prakashan, Delhi, 2001, p. 69.

<sup>138</sup> Rice B. L., eds. *Epigraphia Carnatica*, Vol. VII, HI, 64. Cf. *The Position of Women in Medieval Karnataka*, op. cit, p. 147.

## Chapter V

### Women at Work

The family and the household are the primary units of the society. Being so it combines economic, political, ideological aspects and thereby functions in a unique way in the various manifestations of the society. The maintenance of the household requires doing certain kinds of work and hard labour. Conservative theorists argue, that because men and women are socialized differently, they are suited to different types of work; men are concentrated in jobs that require more technical proficiency and decisions making ability, whereas women pre dominate in the more nurturing, expressive and creative jobs.

It is generally considered that the life of women in Delhi Sultanate was based on household chores. In this chapter we examine the various occupations where women played a vital role. Professions of entertainment were such an acknowledged arena. They were co partners of men in various household works as filling water from wells, collecting fuel, cooking food, nurturing children etc. Female slaves were also employed in various works as for domestic production; they were good singers, spies, guards of the *harem* etc.

Thus the study proposed here, is to provide a picture of women at work during the Thirteenth and Fourteenth century. In professional and entertainment spheres - women as dancers and singers, professional women, entertainers, domestic slaves, public women and concubines etc.

The chapter is mainly based on the sources- *Tarikh-i-Firozshahi* of Ziauddin Barani, *Rehla* of Ibn Battuta, *Nuh Siphir* of Amir Khusrau, *Futuh-us-Salatin* of Isami, *Masalik-ul Absar- fi- Mumalik-al- Amsar* of shihab-al- Din al- Umari, *Akhbar-ul- Akhyar* of Sheikh Abdul Haqq Muhaddis, *Fawaid-ul- Fuad* of Amir Hasan Sijzi and *Siyar-ul- Arifin* of Sheikh Jamali etc.

Generally the activities of the women mainly centred on household chores. They took keen interest in spinning, weaving, sewing cooking and in serving food.<sup>1</sup> Isami has stressed that the place of woman was the home. Instead of wearing the crown they should take interest in spinning and weaving. Amir Khusrau, also considered spinning to be the chief activity of women. They should be able to spin

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<sup>1</sup> *Fawaid- ul- Fuad*, op. cit, p. 118.

*dupatta* for themselves.<sup>2</sup> Even if they were wealthy, they should not abandon the task of spinning and weaving.

In case of majority of ordinary women, the work around household consists of a great variety of subsistence activities such as rearing children, carrying water, collecting fuel, cooking food, serving meals, food transportation, tending cattle, spinning cloth for home use, etc.

Women went to *hauz*,<sup>3</sup> rivers and wells to fetch water in pitchers for household chores. Cooking and serving of food was another duty of the females. Some of them prepared delicious dishes for which they were often rightly rewarded. Asad Khan an influential noble of Sultan Sikandar Lodi, was so much pleased to savour tasty dish of fresh green leaves cooked by a common woman that he rewarded her with a plate full of gold coins. *Nimatnama* manuscript depicts women involved in preparation of delectable dishes (see chapter III) During the reign of Alauddin Khalji, the majority of Hindus were in poor economic situation, because of his stern and stringent rules against *khuts*, *muqaddams* and *chaudharies*. In consequence of their impoverished state, the wives of the erstwhile landed proprietors, and chiefs even used to come to the house of the Muslims and do chores there, and receive wages for it.<sup>4</sup> They often helped their husband in the fields where they especially looked after the cattle.<sup>5</sup>

### **Women and Profession:**

In Medieval India, women played an important role in the organization of production. There was a wide range of activities and avenues which were open for women and so their role was very crucial. But this was not without the division of labour based upon gender.

Women provided assistance in agriculture. They worked for cultivation, planting seeds, smoothening and weeding of plants, husking and winnowing grains.

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<sup>2</sup> Khusrau Amir, *Matla-ul- Anwar*, Nawal Kishore, Lucknow, 1302 A.H., pp. 195- 196.

<sup>3</sup> Barani Ziauddin, *Tarikh-i- Firozshahi*, Vol. I, op. cit., pp. 47-48.

<sup>4</sup> *The Reign of Alauddin Khalji*, op. cit., p.79.

<sup>5</sup> *Life and Conditions of the People of Hindustan*, op. cit., p. 114.

Pounding and grinding of grains was accomplished by women.<sup>6</sup> *Fawaid-ul- Fuad* mentions women singing praise of Almighty while carrying such chores.<sup>7</sup>

Domestic handloom industry was carried with women skill. Amir Khusrau links needle and the spindle used by young woman with spear and arrow.<sup>8</sup> Charkha is the device to spin yarn. Isami says that women are suited only to work on the spinning wheel.<sup>9</sup> Sufi women are known to have been involved in this profession in order to earn a humble livelihood.<sup>10</sup>

Women of all classes were major consumers of products and their preferences clearly played a significant, if not decisive, role in determining the character of the market. There is a reference to the *karkhanas* where different types of clothes were made. Mohammad Tughluq employed no less than four thousand manufacturers of golden tissues for brocades which catered to Sultan Mohammad bin Tughluq, the nobles and his *harem*.<sup>11</sup> The aesthetic interest of women determined the quality of imports from overseas as well. Foreign goods were quite popular with royal families.<sup>12</sup>

### **A- Guards:**

Apart from the household chores, women also worked across different functions and capabilities. They imparted duty of watch guards; they looked after the *harem's* security whereas inside the *harem* they were employed to keep a record of its income and expenditure.

### **B- Spies:**

Ibn Battuta informs us that the emperor's of India employed slave girls who acted as spies for the Sultan on the *amirs*. They proved to be a boon to the royal court when they acted as state informers, informing the Sultan about the minutest detail of the day to day development of the Sultanate.<sup>13</sup> The Sultan also appointed female

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<sup>6</sup> Banerjee Nirmala, 'Analysing Women's Work Under Patriarchy', eds., K. K. Sangari and U. Chakravarty, *From Myth to Market: Essays on Gender*, Shimla, 1999, pp. 321-40.

<sup>7</sup> Sijzi Amir Hasan, *Fawaid-ul- Fuad*, Tr. Ziya-ul- Hasan Faruqi, Delhi, 1996, p. 245.

<sup>8</sup> Askari S. H., *Amir Khusrau- As a Historian*, Patna, 1992 , p. 62.

<sup>9</sup> *Futuh-us- Salatin*, Tr. Agha Mahdi Husain , Vol.II, op. cit., p. 245.

<sup>10</sup> *Khair-ul-Majalis*, ( Majlis-41), op. cit., p. 138.

<sup>11</sup> *Life and Conditions of the People of Hindustan*, op. cit., p. 125.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 143.

<sup>13</sup> Ibn Battuta, Tr. Mahdi Husain, p. 105.

*kannasat* (scavengers) who entered the houses without permission and to them the slave girls communicated information. They informed the administration about the various developments which occurred within the territory. These female scavengers convey this information to the chief of the secret intelligence services (*Malik-ul-Mukhbirin*) who informs the Sultan accordingly<sup>14</sup> for prompt and timely action.

### C- Shopkeepers:

It has been observed that women workers believed in the theory of toiling hard and thus they earned their bread in a *halal* way.<sup>15</sup> Female slaves served their masters with great sincerity and tried to make their life luxurious and comfortable.<sup>16</sup> Women were employed to carry messages from one place to another. They ran shops and sold commodities in the market. Chamoo, a common woman ran a shop in Delhi where she used to sell opium. The saints also employed the females in several ways. The *khanqah* of Sufi saints<sup>17</sup> and the *piri* system indeed had a number of female workers.

Women were exempted from paying the religious tax *jaziya*. After the death of Sultan Iltutmish some women also held *iqtas* and enjoyed the privilege after the death of their husband. But Sultan Balban discontinued this practice and gave them allowances.

Most wealthy households included extra household female members such as mistress, wet nurses, slaves and concubines. The employment of maids among the richer families tended to lighten the work of the women who did less manual work. In these families, there were a number of lower class recruits to take over the responsibility of house work and child care.<sup>18</sup>

### Dance and Singing Artist:

Music has been a subject of controversy among the Muslim jurists. The orthodox school maintained that it was prohibited, whereas liberal thinkers claim that it was permitted. Medieval Indian history clearly shows that Muslim rulers have been

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<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> Hamid Qalandar, *Khair-ul- Majalis* , eds. Nizami K.A., Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, 1959, p. 138.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> Rashid A., *Society and Culture in Medieval India* (1206-1556), Calcutta, Firma K.L. Mukhopadhyay, 1969, p. 140.

<sup>18</sup> Banerjee S. C. & C. Chakravarty, *Folklore in Ancient and Medieval India*, Calcutta, 1991, p. 234.

great lovers of music. Wherever they went, they carried their love of this fine art with them.<sup>19</sup>

The tradition of Indian music and the allied arts of dance and drama go back to times immemorial. Among other amusements and recreations, dancing and singing were quite popular. The presence of dancing and singing girls was supposed to enhance glory of the royal court.<sup>20</sup>

The above entertainers were a differentiated lot. The core of entertainment was dancing and singing. It was the particular audience and the place that determined their rank, status, wealth and security of the performers. For the purpose of offering them to the Sultan's services well known reprobates and old procuresses had trained young girls with elegance, mannerism, grace, bold brunets and shamelessness. Some capable women were trained to sing melodiously, to strike rubab, to recite ghazals and to engage in repartees and to play nard and chess.<sup>21</sup>

Most of the Delhi Sultans,<sup>22</sup> their nobles and men of upper classes listened to and patronized dance and music ungrudgingly. There was hardly a festive occasion which was celebrated without being accompanied by music both vocal and instrumental. The Sultans of Delhi, with few exceptions, were great lovers of music and were fond of both the Perso-Arab and Indian varieties.

Music assemblies were quite common. The text of *Tabaqat-i- Nasiri* points to Sultan Ruknuddin, the son and successor of Sultan Iltutmish, who ruled over the Sultanate for less than a year (April -Nov.1236 ), was exceedingly interested in Indian culture, and patronized music and musicians at his court. He conferred his honourary dresses and presents to musicians and singers.<sup>23</sup> Barani tells us that Sultan Nasiruddin advised Ruknuddin not to get submerged into pleasure and merry-making and to be just to his subject. He was cautioned to keep beautiful girls and musicians away from himself.<sup>24</sup>

The ears of handsome boys were pierced by for pearl ear-rings; beautiful young slave girls were decked like brides.<sup>25</sup> The account of Barani leaves the

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<sup>19</sup> Rizvi S. N., 'Music in Muslim India', *Islamic Culture*, Vol. XV, No. I., Islamic Culture Board, January, 1941, p. 332.

<sup>20</sup> Ibn Battuta, Tr. Rizvi S.A.A., *Tughluq Kaleen Bharat*, Vol. I, Rajkamal Prakashan, New Delhi, 2008, pp. 201-202.; *Society and Culture in Medieval India*, op.cit., p. 89.

<sup>21</sup> Habib Mohammad, *Politics and Society During Early Medieval India*, Delhi, 1981, p. 82.

<sup>22</sup> *Society and Culture in Medieval India*, op.cit., p. 89.

<sup>23</sup> *Tabaqat-i- Nasiri*, Tr. Raverty Vol. I, op. cit., p. 636.

<sup>24</sup> Barani Ziauddin, *Tarikh-i- Firozshahi*, eds. Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, Calcutta, 1862, p. 152.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 130-131.



impression that sensuality and darkness practiced and encouraged at the court proved to be contagious and corrupted many lives of that age. Parasites and pimps flocked in the city under the shade of every wall, persons of both sexes were seen mingling freely, and from every house-top beautiful women exhibited their beauty. Various classes of people of the kingdom, high and low, old and young, learned and illiterate, wise and fools, Hindus and Muslims, began to demonstrate the dictum that subjects follow the ways of their kings.<sup>26</sup>

During Raziya's brief rule (1236- 40 A.D), Indian music received considerable encouragement, and masters of this art were richly rewarded by her.

Sultan Ghiyasuddin Balban's grandson and successor, Muizzuddin Kaiqubad (1287-90 A.D.) indulged in wine, music and debauchery freely, and his indulgence proved so infectious that, during his short reign, the citizens of Delhi had no other business than pleasure, merry making, arranging bouts, eating, singing, listening to Music, mixing with pretty girls, playing chess and telling stories.

The fame of Kaikubad's fondness for dancers and musicians, jesters and buffoons, had reached the remotest parts of the country and hosts of fair and gorgeously decked dancing girls and boys intercepted his advance at every stage of his journey back to Delhi, displaying their charms and skill to lure the repentant king back to the paths of folly. The king tried to resist the temptations, but he failed and fell prey to the eyes of beautiful dancers and the sparkles of the ruby wine, he sank lower and lower into the depths of licentious debauchery.<sup>27</sup>

In the same way, Sultan Jalaluddin Firoz Khalji was a man of poetical bent and had a good ear for music and extended his patronage to this art. Ziauddin Barani's graphic description of the pleasure parties organized in the palace of Sultan Jalaluddin Firoz Khalji on Friday after the congregational prayer tends to show that the singing and dancing girls, well adept in their arts enjoyed the patronage of the Sultan and nobles. By their charming appearance, melodious voice and delightful dance they captivated the hearts of the people.

The Sultan used to organize *Majlis-i- Sultan* where all types of merry making were possible.<sup>28</sup> Barani gives an account of the bewitching and charming musicians of his court. He mentions the names of Mohammad Shah Changi, Futuha, the daughter

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<sup>26</sup> Barani Ziauddin, *Tarikh-i- Firozshahi*, op. cit., pp. 130-131.

<sup>27</sup> Mirza Mohammad Wahid, *The Life and Works of Amir Khusrau*, Idarah-i-Adabiyat-i-Delli, Delhi, Reprint, 1974, p. 74.

<sup>28</sup> Barani Ziauddin, *Tarikh-i- Firozshahi*, op. cit., pp. 197-99.

of Fiqai (the seller of drinker as well as cup bearers), Nusrat Khatoon and her daughter Mahr Afroz, as forming a brilliant galaxy of musicians at Jalaluddin's court.

Barani writes that Nusrat Khatoon sang songs and on account of sweetness of her voice birds came down from the air and the listeners lost their senses; their hearts palpitated and their spirits got stirred.<sup>29</sup> Besides two other ladies, Nusrat Bibi, Dukhtar Kasa, and Mahr Afroz were dancers par excellence. Amir Khusrau talks about Turmati Khatoon, a remarkable singer, entrusted with duties of Amir-i- Murtanin, sang and played with fixed principles of knowledge through art.<sup>30</sup> It is said that the *majlis* of Sultan was like the one that could be seen in dream.<sup>31</sup>

They were associated with the royal household and possessed extraordinary beauty and charm. Well adept in amorous playfulness and delicate manners, they cast their spell in whatever direction they turned, looking languishly through half shut eyes in coquetry. Barani tells us that they performed dance to entertain the royal guests in the pleasure parties of Sultan Jalaluddin Khalji and everyone who chanced to cast glance at their step and witness their amorous manners desired to die for them. The lifeless ones got a fresh life and the sad hearts gladdened.<sup>32</sup>

Ibn Battuta supplements Barani's account, when he describes the decoration of Delhi at the time of Sultan's return along with his army from a distant territory. The city is decorated with wooden pavilions, several stories high and covered with silk clothes. In every pavilion there were singing and dancing girls, wearing most beautiful dresses and ornaments. They greeted the Sultan and his followers with their performance.<sup>33</sup>

Women were involved in festivals, rituals and public fairs. The feasts and festivals are major events created by an entire community to depict the essential life of that community. Alberuni is very prompt in saying that women and children celebrated most of the Hindu festivals.<sup>34</sup>

The most conspicuous women present at public ceremonials were dancers, musicians and singers. Ibn Battuta writes that it was the greatest and most beautiful bazaars which was basically for male and female singers. He tells us that on the side

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<sup>29</sup> Barani Ziauddin, *Tarikh-i- Firozshahi*, op. cit., pp. 197-99.

<sup>30</sup> *Sultan Raziya- Her Life and Times*, op. cit., p. 67.

<sup>31</sup> Barani Ziauddin, *Tarikh-i- Firozshahi*, op. cit., p. 99.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 200.

<sup>33</sup> Ibn Battuta, *Travels of Ibn Battuta*, Tr. Gibb H.A.R., Vol.III, , Munshiram Manoharlal, Delhi 1993, p. 668; Tr. Mahdi Husain, Introduction, op. cit., p. XXXII.

<sup>34</sup> Alberuni Abu Rayhan, *Kitab-ul- Hind*, Tr. Sachau E.C., Vol. II, Delhi, 1964, pp. 178-84.

of *hauz-i- khas* (the lake build by Sultan Alauddin Khalji), where about forty domes and around it musicians *ahl-ut-tarab* and their place is called Tarababad ( pleasure spot). They have there a market which is one of the largest in the world, a congregational mosque and many other mosques, in which the *imam* recites the *taraviah* prayer during the month of *ramzan*<sup>35</sup> and female singers living there also recited congregational prayer in the mosque.<sup>36</sup> The dancing girls and musicians lived in this colony.<sup>37</sup>

These Tarababads were ideal recreation centres. It has numerous shops and every shop has a door which leads into the house of its proprietor, the house having besides this door another exit. Tastefully decorated and furnished with dining rooms and shops containing inner apartments with a cradle on which sat or lay the female singer decked out in all kinds of finery while her female attendants swung the cradle, as well as with markets containing a large cupola lavishly carpeted in their midst in which sat the *Amir-ul-Mutribin* (head musician) takes his place every Thursday after the *asr* prayer in the presence of his servants and slaves, while the female singers came in successive batches before him and danced.<sup>38</sup> All the musicians, both male and female, came and paid their respect to the *chawdhari* by displaying their skill. Such ceremony continued till sunset when the *chawdhari* left the palace. Even some Muslim rulers did the same.

In this bazaar there are more favourable circumstance for an all around development of Indian music reached during the reign of Sultan Alauddin's reign,<sup>39</sup> when on the conquest of Hindu kingdoms, singers migrated to the North to seek the patronage of Muslim Sultans and nobles.

Qutbuddin Mubarak Shah son and successor of Alauddin Khalji, also encouraged music. At his instance Amir Khusrau wrote his *Nuh Siphir*, in which he describes, a *jashn* (celebration) held at the birth of the heir. Apparently in which both Iranian and Indian dancing girls of repute displayed their skill.<sup>40</sup>

During Sultan Mohammad Tughluq, Ibn Battuta informs us of the '*Id*' being celebrated at the court of the Sultan, attended by singers and dancers. He writes that first of all, daughters of *kafir* (Hindu) rajas captured during the course of the year,

<sup>35</sup> Ibn Battuta, Tr. Mahdi Husain, p. 171.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> Rizvi S. N., 'Music in Muslim India', *Islamic Culture*, op. cit., p. 331-40.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.* p. 334

came, sing and dance. Thereafter they are bestowed upon *amirs* and important foreigners. After this daughters of other *kafirs* dance and sing. The Sultan gave them to his brothers, relatives, sons of *maliks* etc. On the second day the *darbar* is held in a similar fashion after *asr*. Female singers are brought out, and the Sultan distributes them among the *Mamluk amirs*.<sup>41</sup>

The author of the *Masalik-ul-Absar* refers to the employment of one thousand musicians in the court of Mohammad Tughluq. Firozshah Tughluq was equally enthusiastic in his patronage of music and lavishly rewarded the masters of the art. He used to encourage musicians and the dancers to a great extent. On every Friday musicians and dancers used to gather in the hall popularly known as *Chhajai- choubin* and entertained the Sultan throughout the day and received rewards at the time of their departure. Even in the program of '*Id*' celebrations music formed an important item before the Sultan left the palace for the prayers. On this day the Sultan rewarded the musicians as well. Amir Khusrau<sup>42</sup> has given vivid details about the dancing girls. Such captivating dancing and singing girls charmed the atmosphere of the court by their grace and talents.

Writing about them, the poet says that mostly the dancing girls had pleasant personalities. Their long black hair often touched the floor.<sup>43</sup> Big eyes, beautiful lips, charming personality and sweet voice, all added charm to their beauty. These women wore costly dress and were decked with ornaments. Their clothes were generally tight and transparent.<sup>44</sup> They often wrapped *dupatta* of silk. Various beauty aids were applied by them which added grace to their personalities. Betel leaves afforded redness to their lips, while black spot on their cheeks was placed in the belief that it would protect them from evil.<sup>45</sup>

*Mushk*<sup>46</sup> (a scent derived from deer's tail and sandalwood paste) was used by them on their face and armpits. Henna too was popular amongst them. They also wore earrings in their bored ears and took pleasure in drinking wine.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Ibn Battuta, Tr. Rizvi S.A.A., *Tughluq Kaleen Bharat*, Vol.I., op. cit., p. 189.

<sup>42</sup> *Nuh Siphir*, M.S.S., part. VII. , op. cit., folios. 45-47.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

## Entertainers:

They were also skilled in playing instruments like flute, Majamir and Tabla etc. They could write, recite verses, relate stories and play musical instruments like sitar. Painting, swimming and riding were their other means of entertainment.<sup>48</sup> Amir Khusrau considered singing and dancing good and amusing in the early stage of a woman's life but he warned women not to patronize it, because it also brings ill fame to them. Women also took delight in display of their ability in playing polo, *chaupal* and chess.<sup>49</sup>

Turmati or Trimati Khatoon<sup>50</sup> besides having melodious voice excelled in playing musical instruments like vina, sitar and sarangi. She enjoyed the capacity the leader of all the Iranian and Indian musicians of the court.<sup>51</sup> Sultan Bahram Shah was so much impressed by the melodious voice of a Chinese maid named, Dilaram that she always accompanied him.<sup>52</sup>

As noted earlier, these dancing girls were often called by the Sultan on the ceremonial occasions like birth and marriage in the royal household.<sup>53</sup> Mubarak Shah celebrated the birth of his son with great éclat. Pavilions were erected and decorated with velvet and brocade curtains. The royal band played at the top of the arch. Amir Khusrau tells us that on the occasion of the marriage of Khizr Khan with the daughter of Alp Khan the whole town was decorated, tents were pitched, and embroidered clothes and curtains were hung. The party of sword- wrestlers displayed their skill. Indian as well as Persian dancing girls were seen on the occasion of Prince Mohammad's birth.<sup>54</sup> They also entertained the royal guests and often graced the occasion of royal reception in the court.

## Domestic Slaves:

In our enumeration of Muslim social classes, we might conveniently treat here the important class of domestics and slaves who were a familiar feature of Medieval

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<sup>48</sup> *Masalik al- Absar fi- Mamalik al- Amsar*, Tr. Rizvi S.A.A., *Tughluq Kaleen Bharat*, Vol.I., op. cit., p. 325.

<sup>49</sup> *Masalik al- Absar fi- Mamalik al- Amsar*, Tr. Siddiqui I. H. and Qazi Mohd. Ahmad, op.cit., p.51.

<sup>50</sup> *Society and Culture in Medieval India*, op. cit., p. 114.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> *Hasht Bihisht*, M.S.S., op. cit., folio. 16.

<sup>53</sup> *Society and Culture in Medieval India*, op. cit., p. 107; *The Life and Conditions of the People of Hindustan*, op. cit., p. 244. *The Life and Works of Amir Khusrau*, op.cit., p.187.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

India. The most important section of these domestics comprised of male and female slaves.

Slave is a term of closest approximation in order to explain the nature of bondage in the Delhi Sultanate. Slaves were generally referred to as, *bandagan* (*banda*), *ghulam*, *kaniz*, *laundi* and *mamluk* in the sources of the Delhi Sultanate. The term *bandah* or *ghulam* were also used metaphorically in order to depict loyalty and association of both free and unfree persons, towards a particular person or God.<sup>55</sup>

In Delhi Sultanate slavery ranged from elite military slavery to menial slavery. It had neither economic, racial, linguistic, cultural connotations nor was it an emblem of powerlessness or dependency always while elite slaves were financially more powerful than the free common people. Military victories of the Sultans sustained mass enslavements of the defeated populations. The act was meant for dual purpose, that is expansion and subduing the rebels. Enslavement of the tax defaulters and war captivation led to large scale slave trade, both import and export. Thus the slave labour emerged as a significant component of urban labour, during the Thirteenth and Fourteenth centuries. As mentioned earlier, the number of slaves in the Sultan's establishments witnessed noticeable increase; fifty thousand under Alauddin Khalji and one lakh eighty thousand under firozshah Tughluq.

The two main source of obtaining slaves were by capture and purchase while means of their disposal were by manumission and sale. Prisoners of war were also an important source.<sup>56</sup> The natural calamity as famine made victims source of enslavement.<sup>57</sup> The Thirteenth Century Lekhapaddhati documents of Gujarat cite one *svayamagata-dasi patra vidhi* where one lady being distressed by famine and malecchas sells herself off.<sup>58</sup> It is Barani who says, the subjects were so obedient that they paid tax even by selling their wives and children.<sup>59</sup>

No study of the life and conditions of women in India during medieval times is complete without a reference to female slavery. The institution of slaves continued to flourish during the Sultanate period. A slave could be sold, mortgaged by owner in

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<sup>55</sup> Khurram Qadir, *The Political Theory and Practice of the Sultanate of Delhi*, Ph.D. Thesis, B.Z.U., Multan, 1992, unpublished, pp. 239-41.

<sup>56</sup> *Campaigns of Alauddin Khalji*, op. cit., p. 33.

<sup>57</sup> Ali Mohammad Khan, *Mirat-i- Ahmadi*, Tr. Lokhandwala M.F., Oriental Institute, Baroda, 1965, p. 494.

<sup>58</sup> Pushpa Prasad, 'Female Slavery in 13<sup>th</sup> Century Gujarat: Documents in Lekhapaddhati', *Indian Historical Review*, Vol., XV, No.1-2, 1988, p. 273.

<sup>59</sup> Barani Ziauddin, *Tarikh-i- Firozshahi*, Tr. Fuller A.R., *Reign of Alauddin Khalji*, A. Banerjee, Calcutta, 1967, p. 147.

order to obtain money from his creator *dhanika*, she could be sold for cash and kind and against a gift in order to earn more income. Brahaspati smriti says, a female slave could never be acquired and possessed without a written deed. There are references to female slaves in 'sale deed' in Lekhapaddhati (13<sup>th</sup> Century Gujarat).<sup>60</sup> The Fourteenth Century Mithila documents talk of mortgaging of slave- Rs. 6 for a male, Rs. 4 for a female and Rs. 3 each for a son and a daughter.<sup>61</sup>

It has been seen that women and children were special targets for enslavement throughout the medieval period. Slave trade was a profitable business. The specialized slave markets<sup>62</sup> were present in many cities and towns. Import and export both were carried out in the markets. Besides large number of Indian slaves, of whom the Assamese slaves were most liked because of their strong physique, male and female slaves were imported from other countries including; Rum, China, Turkistan, Central Asia and Khurasan.<sup>63</sup> The eunuchs were imported from Bengal and Malay Islands.

In fact, female slaves were more in demand than the male slaves in all the civilized countries. Maid slaves were needed both for domestic service and the pursuit of pleasure. In India they were supplied from the different countries as far as eastern Europe in the west and China in the Far East. Though abominable the slave trade had become quite lucrative and therefore the training and education of a slave in arts and craft no matter whether male or female was considered a good investment. Barani states that the fairy faced girls were trained in singing *ghazals* and the art of blandishment before their breasts fully developed; their coquetry could even turn away the recluse from the path of righteousness. Most of the medieval chroniclers have given detailed information about the enslavement of women in times of war. Of the women captured in war, some were presented by the king to the nobles and many other were sold.

Slave women did much of the household tasks. Lekhapaddhati cites women slaves doing household works as grinding, cutting, mopping the floor, sweeping the floor, fetching water, milking cattle, agricultural work, etc.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Pushpa Prasad, 'Female Slavery in 13<sup>th</sup> Century Gujarat: Document in Lekhapaddhati', op. cit., p. 269.

<sup>61</sup> Vidya Vachaspati, *Likhnawali*, eds. Indrakant Jha Patna, 1969, pp. 91- 92.

<sup>62</sup> Andre Wink, *Al-Hind-the Making of Indo-Islamic world. The Slave Kings and the Islamic Conquest, 11-13<sup>th</sup> Centuries*, Vol., II, Oxford, 1999, p. 164.

<sup>63</sup> Nizami K. A., *Royalty in Medieval India*, op. cit., p. 193.

<sup>64</sup> Pushpa Prasad, *Female Slavery in 13<sup>th</sup> Century Gujarat: Documents in the Lekhapaddhati*, op. cit., pp. 269-270.

Women captured during war were sold as slaves. Once a girl was brought under the fold of slavery, she severed her family ties including her husband. The document shows that relatives of the slave girl from either the father or the husband's side could not claim her or even disturb her in any way while she was working as a slave. The slave was the exclusive property of the owner, who was called *janmaagrahaka* in recognition of his right over her life.<sup>65</sup>

Female slaves were of two kinds, those employed for domestic and menial work and others who were brought for the company of their masters under various forms of concubinage.<sup>66</sup> The former, wanting in education and skill and bought expressly for rough domestic work, were often subjected to all sorts of indignities. The latter had a more honourable and sometimes even a dominating position in the household. As Minhaj-us-Siraj in his *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri* mentions that Shah Turkan, wife of Sultan Iltutmish was originally a Turkish hand maid,<sup>67</sup> who rose to the status of chief queen of the Sultan's *harem* by dint of her merit and charm and was honoured with the title of *Khudavanda-i-Jahan* of her name. Apart from the slave girls of India, female slaves were also imported from China and Turkistan<sup>68</sup> as mentioned by Amir khusrau in his *Ijaz Khusravi*. In spite of this there was no restriction on the purchase of female slaves who could be bought and sold like ordinary commodities in the open market.<sup>69</sup> Ibn Battuta informs us that women taken as captive during war were generally distributed amongst the nobles and officers as slaves.<sup>70</sup> He even writes that women as female slaves were generally given and accepted in the form of gift.<sup>71</sup>

These female slaves were at the courtesy of their masters. In the royal *harem* these female slaves shouldered many responsibilities. Sultan Ghiyasuddin of Malwa had 16,000 female slaves in his *harem*.<sup>72</sup> And every female slave used to receive two *tankas* of silver and two *mands* of grain every day for their services.<sup>73</sup>

<sup>65</sup> Pushpa Prasad, *Female Slavery in 13<sup>th</sup> Century Gujarat: Documents in the Lekhapaddhati*, op. cit., pp. 269-270.

<sup>66</sup> Habib Irfan, 'Slavery in the Delhi Sultanate, Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries- Evidence from Sufi Literature', *The Indian Historical Review*, Vol. XV, No. 1-2, p. 260.

<sup>67</sup> *Tabaqat-i- Nasiri*, Vol. I., op. cit., p. 454.

<sup>68</sup> *Ijaz-i- Khusravi*, Vol.I., op. cit., pp. 166-169.

<sup>69</sup> Ziauddin Barani, *Tarikh-i- Firozshahi*, Vol. II., eds. Sheikh Abdul Rashid, op. cit., , p. 145.

<sup>70</sup> Ibn Battuta, Tr. Rizvi S.A.A., *Tughluq Kaleen Bharat*, Vol.I., op. cit., p. 189.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.* p. 237.

<sup>72</sup> *Tabaqat-i- Akbari*, Tr. Rizvi S.A.A., *Uttar Timur Kaleen Bharat*, Vol.II., Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, 1959, p. 93.; Day U.N., *Medieval Malwa*, Munshiram Manoharlal, New Delhi, 1965, pp. 244-246.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*



As noted earlier female slaves attended to the household duties. They went out to fill water from wells in pitchers.<sup>74</sup> Arrangements were made for their security. During the reign of Sultan Balban, Barani informs us that the female slaves were molested by the *mewatis* when they came out to fetch water.<sup>75</sup> This was too much for the Sultan, who strongly dealt with the *mewatis* and did justice to the female slaves.<sup>76</sup>

Female slaves could be bought and sold like other commodities, great variation in their prices was seen due to their nature, beauty, charm and talent. Sultan Alauddin Khalji while enacting his market control policy, set the following norms for female slaves. Barani in his *Tarikh-i- Firozshahi* writes that the price for an ordinary working female slave ranged from five to twelve *tankas*,<sup>77</sup> whereas the one having charming personality could be bought for twenty to thirty *tankas* or even forty *tankas*.<sup>78</sup> He also informs us that a female slave of peerless beauty was sold for even two hundred *tankas*.<sup>79</sup> The price of a slave girl does not exceed 8 *tankas* in Delhi and those who were fit for service as well as concubinage cost 15 *tankas*. But cheap prices existed outside Delhi for female slaves.<sup>80</sup> Ibn Battuta writes that in Bengal a female slave of accomplished beauty and talent could be bought for one golden dinar.<sup>81</sup> He also informs us that a female slave of peerless beauty was thirty *tankas* or even forty *tankas*.<sup>82</sup> He also informs us that a female slave of peerless beauty was sold for even two hundred *tankas*.<sup>83</sup> The price of a slave girl does not exceed 8 *tankas* in Delhi and those who were fit for service as well as concubinage cost 15 *tankas*. But cheap prices existed outside Delhi for female slaves.<sup>84</sup> Ibn Battuta writes that in Bengal a female slave of accomplished beauty and talent could be bought for one golden dinar.<sup>85</sup>

The difference in price was caused by grace of her department or refinement of her manners. Besides, there was another regulation later on that if a slave girl or a

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<sup>74</sup> Barani Ziauddin, *Tarikh-i- Firozshahi*, Vol. I., op. cit., pp. 47-48.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 65-66.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. II., p. 145.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>80</sup> *Masalik al- Absar fi- Mamalik al- Amsar*, Tr. Siddiqui I. H. and Qazi Mohd. Ahmad, Aligarh, Siddiqui Publishing house, 1972, p. 51.

<sup>81</sup> Ibn Battuta, Tr. Rizvi S.A.A., *Tughluq Kaleen Bharat*, Vol. I., op. cit., p. 301.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>84</sup> *Masalik al- Absar fi- Mamalik al- Amsar*, Tr. Siddiqui I. H. and Qazi Mohd. Ahmad, op. Cit., p. 51.

<sup>85</sup> Ibn Battuta, Tr. Rizvi S.A.A., *Tughluq Kaleen Bharat*, Vol.I., op. cit., p. 301.

concubine of a person had fled away, the administrator of royal affairs should find them out and restore them to rightful owner.<sup>86</sup>

Barani furnishes the prices which he affirms were current in the bazaar of Delhi.

The prices are in *tanka*, the heavy and pure silver coin of circa 170 grains. The following table illustrates the prices of the slaves.

Comparison of the prices for slaves (in <i>Tankas</i> )		
Slave	Prices	
Details	From	To
A servant girl	5 <i>Tankas</i>	12 <i>Tankas</i>
A male Consort	20 „	30 „
A concubine	30 „	40 „
An experienced servant boy	7 „	8 „
An experienced servant man	10 „	15 „

**Source:** Simon Digby, *War Horse and elephant in the Delhi Sultanate: A study of Military Supplies* (Oxford. Oriental Monographs. 1971) pp. 37-38. Cf. Fouzia Farooq Ahmed, *The Delhi Sultanate: A slave Society or A Society with Slaves*, *Pakistan Journal of History and Culture*, Vol. XXX, No. 1, 2009.

Barani also mentions a rise in the price in the days when he was writing in 1359.<sup>87</sup> This was undoubtedly part of a general rise in prices. It also reflected a possible fall in the supply of slaves on the markets, due to the decline in the military power of the Sultanate.<sup>88</sup>

In the Sultanate sources, the number and prices of the slaves are given to explain the economic status of the masters and also to depict the fiscal conditions of the country at a particular time. The prices fluctuated in the times of war and famine.<sup>89</sup> The talented and well trained slaves were undoubtedly very expensive and were only meant for those who could afford them.

The Sultans of Delhi considered slaves among the most valuable goods to be utilized in form of gift as a diplomatic tool for appeasement. Therefore, on one

<sup>86</sup> *Mirat-i- Ahmadi*, Tr. Lokhandwala M.F., op. cit., p. 223.

<sup>87</sup> Habib Irfan, 'Economic History of the Delhi Sultanate: An essay in Interpretation', *Indian Council of Historical Research*, No. 2, Jan. 1978, p. 91.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>89</sup> Majumdar R.C., *An Advanced History of India* , London, Macmillan and Co. 1950, p. 400.

occassion Nasir-ud-din Mahmud gave forty slaves to Balban.<sup>90</sup> The Sultans also favoured their nobles by presenting themselves as gifts. Those who visited the Sultan also presented slaves as gifts to them. Ibn Battuta gives an account of this transaction of presents in his travelogue. He presented a slave girl to the mother of Mohammad Tughluq, who in turn gave one thousand rupees, gold jewelry and expensive clothes to him.<sup>91</sup> Similarly, the slaves were among the recipients of the royal robes, endowed by Mohammad Tughluq.<sup>92</sup> The female slaves also entertained the masses on special occasions. Just as when the Sultan returned to the capital after some expedition the slave girls entertained everyone in the celebrations. There were thousands of slaves who paraded in front of the Sultan while the army marched behind him.<sup>93</sup>

The slave system was organized on an efficient basis by Firozshah Tughluq. Afif has given an interesting account of the slave system as it prevailed during Firozshah. When the feudatories went to the court, they took with them beautiful slave girls dressed and ornamented in the most splendid style. Great number of slaves were thus collected and employed in the service of the state. The Sultan was very anxious to have expert artisans to work in the state *karkhanas* and hence the most intelligent of the slaves were taught mechanical arts so that about 12,000 slaves became artisans of various kinds. In fact there was no occupation in which the slaves of Firozshah were not employed.<sup>94</sup> The aristocratic classes also kept slaves and maintained *harem*. Beautiful slave girls fit to act as mistress were available. Khan-i-Jahan kept beautiful maids in his *harem*. He had two thousand women of Rome and China in his harem. It was the practice of the nobility to take along slave girls whenever they travelled.<sup>95</sup>

The relationship between the female slaves and the household women was a complex one, but where the former enjoyed sexual intimacy of the male head, jealousy was common. Sheikh Nasiruddin Chiragh told a prosperous female disciple *murid* that she could become his disciple if she behaved well with the slaves.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Banerjee J. M., *History of Firoz Shah Tughluq*, op. cit., p. 133.

<sup>91</sup> Ibn Battuta, *Ajaib-ul-Asfar*, Urdu Tr. Maulvi Muhammad Hussain, Islamabad: NIHCR, 1983, p. 211.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 104.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 109.

<sup>94</sup> Pal Dharam, 'The Influence of the Slaves in the Muslim Administration of India', *Islamic Culture*, Vol. XVIII, Nos. 1-4, Hyderabad, 1944, p. 417.

<sup>95</sup> *Society and Culture in Medieval India*, op. cit., p. 90.

<sup>96</sup> Qazi Hamid Qalandar, eds, *Khair-ul Majalis*: Discourses of Sheikh Nasiruddin Chiragh-i- Delli, Urdu Tr. M. Ahmad Ali, Delhi, not dated, p. 139.

Since these slave girls had an access to the royal court, they were well acquainted with the etiquette of the court. Some of the Muslim slave girls knew the *Quran* by heart and they lived a chaste life, performed prayers and observed fasts regularly.<sup>97</sup> They observed *purdah* and moved about from one place to another in closed litters.<sup>98</sup> These girls were trained in the art of coquetry and elegance and were taught riding, polo game and wielding the lance with accomplishments and graces.

Thus in the Sultanate economy, female slaves played indispensable role and thus could not be kept secluded. There was always a scope for accommodating them in every sphere by allowing them to work in veil.

It was not uncommon for a Sufi or *darwesh* to have a slave girl. It is said about Mian Zain-ud-din, a religious man that whenever a slave, was brought for him from bazaar, he placed him/her under charge of a tutor for teaching prayer. Again our text *Masalik* enumerates the refinement of manners.<sup>99</sup>

The female slaves who extended their selfless and sincere services to their masters were called for a mild treatment by the Sufis. Their intelligence and efficient services often enabled them to get emancipation from slavery on various occasions. Imam Shafai once happened to be the guest of one of his friends. The latter instructed his female servant to prepare dinner.<sup>100</sup> The Imam brought about some changes in the prescribed menu by adding a few more dishes of his liking.<sup>101</sup> When the host enquired about the change in menu the maid told him about the alterations made by the Imam.<sup>102</sup> The female servant was highly praised by her master for her efficiency. Not only this, she was eventually set free.<sup>103</sup> Thus the Sufis treated their maid servants kindly. On occasions when they showed skills, efficiency and tact, they were voluntarily set free.

Sheikh Jamaluddin Hansvi had a maid servant who used to carry the letters of her master to Baba Farid. The latter used to call her *mother of Muslims*, because of her sincere and sweet nature.<sup>104</sup> The *khanqah* of Sheikh Bahauddin Zakariya presents an ideal example of a number of female slaves employed in service of men and God. The

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<sup>97</sup> Ibn Battuta, Tr. Mahdi Husain, p. XXV.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 122.

<sup>99</sup> *Masalik-ul- Absar- Mumalik -al Amsar*, Tr. Siddiqui I. H. and Qazi Mohd. Ahmad, op. cit., p. 51.

<sup>100</sup> *Fawaid-ul- Fuad*, op. cit., p. 118.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>104</sup> *Siyar-ul- Arifin*, M.S.S., op. cit., folio., 57 a.

Sufis believed that maid servants could perform both the services simultaneously without any hindrance.<sup>105</sup>

Another episode illustrating how the wishes of a poor old working female (who used to sweep the floor in Abul Syeed-ul- khair's *khanqah* ) were acceded to her, by her master.<sup>106</sup> The old women performed her duties well and expected reward. Once a handsome youth entered in the services of the Sheikh, she expressed her wish to the Sheikh to arrange her marriage with him.<sup>107</sup> The Sheikh mediated and asked the youth to marry the old woman.<sup>108</sup> Again the old female insisted that the marriage be performed with all the ceremonies *jalwa*, *nikah*, and *feast*. Elaborate preparations were made and the marriage was solemnized. The maid servant also made the youth swear in front of the Sheikh to remain loyal to her throughout his life.<sup>109</sup>

This is how the Sheikh fulfilled the wishes of an old maid servant and also expressed his gratitude for the long services which she rendered in the *khanqah*. The services which the female slaves generally performed for their masters consisted mostly of cooking and serving the food.<sup>110</sup> Rashid Pandit had one such female servant who carried out her duty well. Being a merchant, Rashid Pandit was always busy in his work. The female servant once enquired to lay food for him, which he declined. Again she reminded her master to take the meals because the food was getting cold but Rashid Pandit refused to eat. At night again she requested him politely to have his food and she was then told that he had already eaten it. The maid servant was quite surprised at this answer<sup>111</sup> and boldly enquired about the time when he partook his meal. Rashid calmly told her that since he was too busy in his work he hardly remembered the time when he had his food.<sup>112</sup> The incident shows deep concern and sincerity of the female slaves towards the welfare and comforts of her master. Perhaps female servants by virtue of their natural feminine tenderness looked after their masters well.

Prophet Mohammad (S.A.W.) enunciated that a maid servant who served both the divine master and the earthly master was commendable. The Sufis also stressed

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<sup>105</sup> *Fawaaid-ul- Fuad*, op. cit., pp. 148-149.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>110</sup> *Khair-ul- Majalis*, op.cit., pp. 92- 93.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*

this fact that the maids should look after the welfare of their master and perform their duties loyally for which they would be rightly rewarded.

Since slaves being an article of property, constituted wealth, their manumission would be an act of charity, at par the merit with other gifts of the needy. These anecdotes are valuable in demonstrating to us clearly what an important element the slaves were in urban life of the Delhi Sultanate.<sup>113</sup>

### **Public Women:**

The institution of the public women was quite active during the Sultanate period.<sup>114</sup> The prostitutes and courtesans were an important source of entertainment and it was an important profession too. The prostitution in India was inseparably associated with professional entertainers. As far as Medieval India is concerned, the women employed in this profession combined it with a large number of other skills, such as dancing, singing etc.

Alberuni points out, that the kings made them an attraction for their cities, a bait of pleasure for their subjects for none other but financial reasons. By revenues, which they derive from the business both as fines and taxes, they wanted to recover the expenses which their treasury has to spend on army.<sup>115</sup>

Though public women were looked down in the society, yet they were considered to be the main source of entertaining of the youth. Once they resolved to undertake this profession all their ties with their families were cut off,<sup>116</sup> and they led a life devoid of family love and emotions. Bibi Tabha,<sup>117</sup> received a humiliating reception at the hands of Amir Khusrau. The poet placed her on an ass and took her round the city to investigate as to whom she belonged. To his surprise none came forth to claim her. Thus Amir Khusrau finally took her to the hakim to punish for her undesirable acts.<sup>118</sup>

Syed Nuruddin Mubarak Ghaznavi, a saint who flourished during the days of Sultan Iltutmish failed to take the step of wiping off the presence of the public

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<sup>113</sup> Irfan Habib , 'Slavery in the Delhi Sultanate, Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries- Evidence from Sufi Literature', *Indian Historical Review*, op. cit., p. 268.

<sup>114</sup> *Masalik-al- Absar fi- Mamalik-al- Amsar*, Tr. Siddiqui I. H. and Qazi Mohd. Ahmad, op.cit., p.67.

<sup>115</sup> *Kitab-ul- Hind*, Tr. Sachau E.C., Vol.II., op. cit., pp. 178-84.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>117</sup> *Ijaz-i- Khusravi*, Vol. V., op. cit., p. 151.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 152.

women. He was anxious that these public women should carry on their profession in a quiet and subservient manner.<sup>119</sup>

Amir Khusrau tells us, that all prostitutes, who with their locks under their ears had broken their chains and stretched their feet, have now been lawfully married. From the ribbon, that tied their hair, they have now turned to the ribbon that ties them in marriage. Those, whose skirts had obtained a bad reputation because they earned their living by prostitution, have now been so reformed that they may set in their houses. Vidyapati who flourished in the Fifteenth Century found prostitutes at Jaunpur. He says that the prostitute, who had no husband, used vermilion. They decorated their bodies, marking their faces with dot or variegated colours and their lips were painted. They wore rich clothes and dressed their hair. They looked at men with smile. They bedecked their hair with flowers. Some of them were old; some were fond of cutting jokes.<sup>120</sup>

In the absence of any restriction imposed by the state, the number of these public women swelled and by the reign of Sultan Alauddin Khalji, it reached to the extent of causing public anarchy. To avoid such a state of confusion, the Sultan deemed it necessary to curb the nefarious activities of these public women.<sup>121</sup> The attitude of Sultan Alauddin Khalji towards public women was very queer. He regularized the institution by fixing up the prices of the prostitutes after categorizing them into three grades. In compliance of his market regulations the Sultan classified public women into first, second and third categories, the charges of their services were also fixed accordingly.

The prostitutes could not charge higher than the rate fixed by the state.<sup>122</sup> Their relations with the visitors were to be governed by a strict code of conduct. To improve the moral values of the society, it is said that during the reign Sultan Alauddin Khalji, he also made measure to stop this abominable profession and prostitutes had to be lawfully married.<sup>123</sup> Further some sort of registration was officially done without which these women were forbidden to carry out trade in flesh.<sup>124</sup> No doubt these women were involved in vice but they did follow certain

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<sup>119</sup> *Society and Culture in Medieval India*, op. cit., p. 90.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 91.

<sup>121</sup> Ferishta Abdul Qasim, Tr. Rizvi S.A.A., *Khalji Kaleen Bharat*, Rajkamal, New Delhi, 2005, op. cit., pp. 228- 229.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>123</sup> *Campaigns of Alauddin Khalji*, op. cit., p. 11.

<sup>124</sup> *Masalik- al- Absar fi- Mamalik-al- Amsar*, Tr. Siddiqui I. H. and Qazi Mohd. Ahmad, op.cit., p.67.

norms. It was the practice that once they accepted an amount in advance from an individual they entertained that person only at the appointed time. No matter how much more money was provided to them, they refused to accept the proposal of another client.<sup>125</sup>

Apart from getting royal patronage, these captivating women were also encouraged by the nobles. Their beauty coupled with their skill in dance and music was instrumental in popularizing them amongst men in high ranks as well ordinary birth. Nizamuddin Sughra, the Sheikh-ul- Islam during the reign of Sultan Iltutmish, sought the co operation of a public woman named Gauhar to inflict the charge of adultery upon a Sufi saint, namely Sheikh Jalaluddin Tabrizi.<sup>126</sup> Their conspiracy failed to provide an evidence.<sup>127</sup>

Maulana Shams Asadi, who had acquired respectable position in religious field, also visited the house of public women.<sup>128</sup> In the Sharqi Dynasty of Jaunpur the institution of public women too flourished.<sup>129</sup> These women wore transparent garments, used various aids of beautification and attempted in every possible way to lure innocent people for immoral acts. These women were completely devoid of morality and their mode of life was undesirable.

To illustrate the anecdote of Amir Khusrau deserves to be mentioned. The poet specially refers to Lang Khatoon an ill reputed woman, who refused to entertain her client because she had to maintain herself for other customers.<sup>130</sup> It is difficult to analyze the cause for the popularity of prostitution. The account of Amir Khusrau gives an idea about it.

Amir Khusrau refers to Argawan Khatoon<sup>131</sup> (prostitute) who was also seen in her attire decked with ornaments and jewels. There was a necklace around her neck and *bindi* on her fore head. She was fond of betel leaves.<sup>132</sup> Another prostitute, Baghachi Khatoon was devoid of physical charm yet she was adored by sensuous men. In spite of her swollen body and large teeth, she was very charming and much in demand.<sup>133</sup> Gazacha Khatoon was another public woman who attracted the poet's

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<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>126</sup> *Akhbar-ul- Akhyar*, op. cit., p. 44; *Siyar-ul- Arifin*, op. cit., folio. 142 b.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>128</sup> *Ijaz-i- Khusravi*, Vol. IV, op. cit. p. 206.

<sup>129</sup> *Society and Culture in Medieval India*, op. cit., p. 91.

<sup>130</sup> *Ijaz-i- Khusravi*, Vol. V, op. cit., p. 130.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 127-28.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*



(Amir Khusrau) attention. She was short necked; one of her shoulder was higher than the other but she was not so popular.<sup>134</sup> These references show that physical beauty mattered a lot in the popularity of public women. Moreover they applied various beauty aids to add charms to their personality.

The wishes of the some of these public women were strange. Garara Khatoon, a prostitute, aged ninety years was passionately in love with a youth of eighteen years and her earnest desire was to marry him. But whenever the boy saw her, fled. Thus all her hopes were shattered.<sup>135</sup> Mushba Khatoon was fond of eating all the time. She used to keep ten sheers of roasted grams in her *dupatta* and all the time she was busy in eating it. Her mouth produced sound like that of a grinding machine.<sup>136</sup>

The Sufis were not silent on the issue of prostitution. The presence of prostitutes in society served the purpose of its own but their activities were to be carried on secretly without making much publicity.<sup>137</sup> Complete eradication of prostitution perhaps would have meant a menace to the pious women who would be exposed to unquenchable human lust. No doubt, it is an offensive profession, but it served to divert and satisfy lascivious men.

Another heinous crime was adultery. It was an unpardonable act and those who indulged in it were subjected to harsh public punishment (stoning to death). This was to infuse a sense of fear in the hearts of the people to keep them away from immoral acts. It also combated the growing evil of prostitution.

The aim of Sufi saints was to lead a pious and holy life but they were often made victims of the crafty designs of men who were envious of their fame and prestige. Such men organized conspiracies to cast a slur on their fair name with the help of public women.<sup>138</sup>

During the reign of Sultan Iltutmish, the Sufi saints were welcomed and patronized by the royal court.<sup>139</sup> The Sufis flocked around the city of Delhi where Sultan Iltutmish provided facilities and comforts to them. When Sheikh Jalaluddin Tabrizi visited Delhi, after his arrival from Baghdad, the royal reception was so grand and honourable that it aroused undue envy in the hearts of Sheikh-ul-Islam,

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<sup>134</sup> *Ijaz-i- Khusravi*, Vol. V, op. cit. pp. 127-129.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>137</sup> *History of Sufism in India*, op. cit., p., 194.

<sup>138</sup> *Siyar-ul- Arifin*, M.S.S., folio., 142., *History of Sufism in India*, Vol.I., op.cit., p. 200.

<sup>139</sup> *Tabaqat-i- Nasiri*, Tr. Rizvi S.A.A., *Adi Turk Kaleen Bharat*, Rajkamal, New Delhi, 2005, pp. 22-23.

Najmuddin Sughra. The latter hatched a conspiracy in connivance with a singing public woman, named Gauhar who lived in Delhi, to defame the Sheikh.<sup>140</sup>

Najmuddin Sughra promised to pay Gauhar five hundred gold coins for her co operation in casting aspersions on the Sheikh by alleging him of committing adultery.<sup>141</sup> For this work Najmuddin Sughra paid half that amount in advance to Gauhar, and gave the rest to Ahmad Sharaf a *baqqal* (grocer) of Delhi, to be paid later on after the completion of the work. Gauhar was a nymph and tried her best to attract and seduce people. She was very pretty and was often called at the royal court for entertainment.<sup>142</sup> Her greed provoked her to charge Sheikh Tabrizi with adultery. In order to make the charge appear genuine she even produced false witnesses.<sup>143</sup>

A *mahzar* (court) was summoned under the aegis of Hakim Sheikh Bahauddin Zakariya.<sup>144</sup> Sheikh Tabrizi and Gauhar were asked to clarify their position. When Sheikh Tabrizi entered the court, hakim Sheikh Bahauddin stood up and out of sheer respect took the sheikh's sandals in his hands.<sup>145</sup> This act of reverence plunged Gauhar into panic. She could not contain herself and while taking oath to speak the truth she flattered down and confessed the crime.<sup>146</sup>

The conspiracy was deducted; Ahmad Sharaf was summoned and examined. Finally the case was withdrawn and Sheikh Tabrizi was absolved of the charge.<sup>147</sup> Sheikh-ul-Islam, Najmuddin Sughra was then dismissed from the royal service. Sheikh Tabrizi ultimately left for Bengal saying that this false charge had undermined his prestige and reduced him from pure gold to silver.<sup>148</sup> Thus with the convenience of public women attempts were made to defame the Sufi saints, by evil minded people. But their efforts always proved futile.

Khwaja Zikrullah narrated the account of a man<sup>149</sup> who went from Delhi to Ajodhan<sup>150</sup> to confess his sins before Baba Farid and then to start a fresh pious life. On his way he accosted a woman of captivating charm who had earlier lured him on several occasions. But the man never fell victim to her carnal instincts. While

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<sup>140</sup> *Akhbar-ul- Akhyar*, op.cit., pp. 44-45.

<sup>141</sup> *Siyar-ul- Arifin*, M.S.S., op. cit., folio., 141 a.; *History of Sufism in India*, op. cit., p. 200.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, folio., 142.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.* folios. 142-43.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.* folio. 144 b.

<sup>149</sup> *Fawa'id-ul- Fuad*, op. cit., pp. 219-220.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*

travelling on a boat the women sat next to the man and almost succeeded in achieving her goal.<sup>151</sup> But another man who knew of her evil intentions interfered at the right moment and warned him to keep off from that vile woman.<sup>152</sup> Thus the man who was going on a pious mission was saved from felling a victim to the seductions of the lustful woman and reached to Baba Farid safely.

The Sufi saints knew well that it was their duty to espouse the cause of the helpless and down trodden people in the society. Women received priority in attention from the Sufis. They readily accepted women as their disciples without making any gender discrimination. The Sufis also kept them as their personal care takers. They considered it better than offering prayers, to help the needy women. It was their prime objective to unite people, inculcate in them love for God and serve the humanity. Thus their effort was to bring peace and bliss to the people at large and women were no exception to it.

Sheikh Nizamuddin was not reluctant even to help the prostitute, if they were found in need. His treatment of the prostitutes casts light on his humanism. Sheikh Muhammad Gesudaraz tells us on the authority of his father and the disciples of the Sheikh that his holiness, every time when he went to visit the shrine of sheikh-ul-Islam Qutbuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki, he fixed allowance for the prostitutes who sat in the open tents along the route. Once he sent someone to tell them in the summer that the Sheikh would like to take rest under the shade if they moved aside for a while. In the meantime, all the prostitutes came out as they waited for the Sheikh for *salam* (paying respect). They stood in the middle of the road. The Sheikh fixed allowance for every one of them and ultimately it took the form of a regular stipend. On the occasions of *urs* celebration (death ceremonies of the past saints ) he sent for them victuals and money in addition to their stipend. Some of them got two silver *tankas* and two varieties of victuals, while others got one silver *tanka* and single variety each.<sup>153</sup>

Thus it seems that public women were quite popular during the Sultanate period. The names given by Amir Khusrau are fictitious (which the poet himself confessed)<sup>154</sup> but their activities gave an idea of the social milieu which was prevalent in the society.

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<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>153</sup> Mohammad Husaini, *Javami-ul- Kalim* ( collection of the utterances of Shaikh Gesudaraz), Kanpur, 1356 A.H., p. 123.

<sup>154</sup> *Society and Culture in Medieval India*, op. cit., p. 91.

### **Concubines:**

The Sultans gave liberal patronage to concubines,<sup>155</sup> but they did not enjoy the status of a married wife. It appears that the children born from them were deprived of various privileges and opportunities. This fact can be well illustrated by the case of Kai Khusrau. The elite overlooked the claim of Kai Khusrau to the throne in spite of Sultan Balban's will.<sup>156</sup> The nobles considered it improper to extend support to the son of a concubine and elevate the offspring of such union to the throne of Delhi. This indicates that though the concubines were accepted and patronized, yet their issues could not claim certain legal rights. They received discriminative treatment in several respects.

### **Conclusion:**

The evidence presented indicates that women were co sharers with in major economic activities. Women played an active part in craft production such as spinning and weaving. Romila Thapar in the context of Mauryan society acknowledges women as assistance to husband such a situation is gleaned here in the context of cultivation. In the sphere of entertainment and amusement they were acclaimed as efficient dancers and singers. The other professions like acting as intelligence agents, guards assigned them responsible services.

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<sup>155</sup> Afif Shams Siraj, *Tarikh-i- Firozshahi*, op. cit, p. 288.

<sup>156</sup> *Futuhus- Salatin*, op. cit., p. 184-85.

## Chapter VI

### Social Norms, Customs and Institutions Pertaining to Women

Social institutions are the determinants of the socializing process. It is the social institution and social norms in a society, which establish the integrity, ethics and morality. Religion acts as a control over society. Education is another vital social institution to shape the personality of the individual. Similarly family is significant social institution. It is a small unit or form of society. It entails marriage, divorce, widowhood, dowry, etc.

In the present chapter, I have dealt with the social aspects encompassing chastity, marriage, widowhood, *sati*, *jauhar* and *purdah*, which are mainly related to women. During Sultanate rule in India, education system was somehow similar to that of Islamic countries. Private tutors were also employed for the education of women.

I have based my chapter on the available evidence from Amir Khusrau's *Matla-ul- Anwar*, *Hasht Bihisht*, *Nuh Siphir* and *Ijaz-i- Khusravi*, Ibn Battuta's *Rehla* and *Tarikh-i- Firozshahi* of Barani etc.

Women had an important role in the social and cultural life of a country. Unfortunately we know little about the role of women during the Sultanate period. The available information regarding the position and status of women in society is fragmentary.

Islam raised the status of women in the society, at least legally as high as that of men. The Quran declared man and woman equal before the law, the only discrimination of rank was that in quality of piety. Several verses of the Quran emphasize alike the dignity of man and woman in the society, and both are equal in the eyes of God and equally rewarded for their good deeds.<sup>1</sup> Consequently, Muslim women were able to exercise their skills and talents in different fields- social, economic, educational and cultural, during the time of the Prophet and early Caliphs.

The existing evidences reveal the varied nature of views which were held about women. Some averred that women were inferior by nature and were not fit to be

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<sup>1</sup> Al-Quran, *Surah- al- Nahl*, 16/ 79.

entrusted with any responsible work.<sup>2</sup> Even a lady of talented ability was made to understand her limitations. She was to accept a status of dependence on man because of her physical disabilities.<sup>3</sup> Perhaps Malik Mohammad Jaisi represents the impression of the people when he says: “you are women and deficient in sense that man is a fool who takes the advice of women folk at home.”<sup>4</sup> We find the corroboration of this view in *Manusmriti* that women must be kept in dependence by the males of their families, and if they attach themselves to sensual enjoyments, they must be kept under one’s control.<sup>5</sup>

In their early life their father protects her, after marriage they come under their husband’s protection and in their old age, their children look after them. Let the husband employ his wife in the collection, expenditure of his wealth; in keeping everything clean; in the fulfillment of religious duties; in the preparation of his food and in looking after the household utensils.

In the eastern countries which came under the influence of Islam, women have generally been assigned a place in the back ground and their manifold activities in the various spheres of national life, political, social and cultural, have seldom been given prominence to by the Muslim historians, while they have depicted the glorious deeds of their men with minute care. It must not be supposed that Islam has relegated women to an inferior social position, or that the Muslims as a community have ever treated their women with contempt decried their natural talents. That our historians are so shy of delving upon the human virtues, and intellectual gifts of women, is chiefly due to a false notion of respectability. To the Muslims, women are a sacred trust, the *harim* or *harem*; which has to be guarded with jealous care and protection from the preying eyes of the populace; they are not to be dragged into the lime light of publicity, and their deeds, however, noble should not be broadcast, since they were meant for the special benefit of their male relatives.

The Muslim rulers who ruled in India during this period, with the exception of the *Syeds*, the *Lodis* and the *Surs* were of Turkish or Mongol origin, and they brought with them into this country the old nomadic traditions of their ancestors, who roamed from place to place over the pasture lands of Central Asia. Segregation of women was

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<sup>2</sup> *Society and Culture in Medieval India*, op. cit., p. 129.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> Jaisi Malik Mohammad, *Padmavati*, Tr. Shirreff A. G., Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta, 1944, p. 91.

<sup>5</sup> *Society and Culture in Medieval India*, op. cit., p. 129.

a physical impossibility in a pastoral society, and Turkish women, like their earlier sisters of pre Islamic Arabia, enjoyed a measure of freedom scarcely to be found among other peoples. They were treated as equals of men in all matters pertaining to peace or war, rode side by side with their men, and were skilled in the use of the lance and the bow. They exercised great influence on their male relations and were consulted in all important affairs. Ibn Battuta has left us an interesting account of how the Queens of the Great Khan of the golden horde held court and received visitors.<sup>6</sup>

Polygamy was widely practiced, especially by the members of noble and aristocratic families, but very often the co wives lived amicably together like sisters, sharing in the joys and sorrows of one another. This seldom questioned the legitimacy or propriety of this institution and on the whole their lives were happy and contented nor did it interfere with their dignity and self respect nor detract from their position as the proud partners of their husbands.

In India the Muslims came into contact with a social order different in several respects from the one to which they had been used, but they were quick to perceive its fine points and noble principles on which it was based. They were specially struck by the high ideals of Hindu women, so that with the fusion of Hindu and Muslim cultures, there was evolution in the course of time a code of chivalry which combined the best traditions of the two communities which remains unparalleled in the history of the human race.

Muslim women received far more liberal treatment in matters of inheritance than their Hindu counterparts. This can be illustrated by the mode of division of property after the father's death, daughters receiving half of that of her brother. However under the Muslims the disabilities arising from the male tutelage of unmarried and married women remained in force. The author of *Adab-ul-Harb* opines that a wife was not to be trusted in matters of consequences, and if it was unavoidable to consult her, the best course was to act contrary to her advice.<sup>7</sup> According to him the Muslims showed no disregard the social conventionalities. She was regarded mentally weak and deficient in wisdom.

## **Women and Morality:**

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<sup>6</sup> Ibn Battuta, Tr. Gibb . H. A. R. Vol. III., op. cit., p. 736.

<sup>7</sup> *Fakhr-i- Modabbir*, p. 67. Cf. , *Life and Conditions of the People of Hindustan*, p. 168.

Men acted as custodians of the honour and chastity of women. K. M. Ashraf observes in the context that with the growth of general sensuality and sexual indulgence, an unhealthy attitude developed on all sides. People put considerable value on the chastity of women, exactly in the same measure as they encouraged its absence among man.<sup>8</sup> Women were to remain chaste not only in conduct but also in their thought. Interestingly enough we learn that a pious and chaste lady was called *Rabia* of the time. Such a lady even belonging to the lower strata of society was respected.

By indulging in vices or immoral activities women undermined their prestige and brought dishonor to their family.<sup>9</sup> They were supposed to remain pure in thoughts, words and deeds.<sup>10</sup> Amir Khusrau, warned such women that death alone could purify them if they took a life of vices.<sup>11</sup> Holy water purifies everything except an immoral woman. A debase woman loses confidence of people. He cautioned people not to tell secrets to such women who were prone to evil acts.<sup>12</sup>

Certain ethical codes have been outlined by Amir Khusrau<sup>13</sup> which ought to be adhered by a virtuous woman. He considered eye the chief cause of all vice, an outlet of one's desires and intentions. Thus he advised women to keep their gage low and preserve them like pearls which lie safe in the shells. They should not stare at unknown persons. Similar to Chaitanya, Amir khusrau also warned women that on being alone they should not sit near anyone except their husband. They should avoid having conversation with males.

During the Sultanate period various references are found when females sacrificed their lives in order to maintain their chastity. The popularity of *sati* and *jauhar*<sup>14</sup> confirm it. Amir Khusrau, in *Matlaul Anwar*, narrates the extent to which a woman went in order to preserve her integrity and morality. Nothing could tempt them to lose their moral values.<sup>15</sup>

However in contrast to the above, there existed another class of women who were easily lured to worldly gain and pleasure. The presence of public women

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<sup>8</sup> *Life and Conditions of the People of Hindustan*, op. cit., pp. 167-68.

<sup>9</sup> *Hasht Bihisht*, M.S.S., op. cit., folios. 27- 29.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> *Matla-ul- Anwar*, op. cit., p. 198.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> Day, U.N., *Medieval Malwa*, Munshiram Manoharlal Oriental Publishers, Delhi-6, First Edition , 1965, p. 50., *Life and Conditions of the People of Hindustan*,. p. 192.

<sup>15</sup> *Matla-ul- Anwar*, op. cit., p. 199.



illustrates this point. It should be noted that attempts were often made by the royal authorities to tone the moral values of the society and especially of such women. Whenever immoral incidents came to light severe punishments were inflicted which were exemplary to others.

Wine became a popular drink amongst a section of women. Though drinking of wine among the females during Delhi Sultanate was not popular yet it was not unknown to them.<sup>16</sup> Sometimes, they were forced to drink wine.<sup>17</sup> To tone up the moral values of women, Amir Khusrau vehemently opposed the consumption of wine by them. According to him, consuming of wine was the root cause of bringing destruction of the family.<sup>18</sup>

Adultery was another vice which was prevalent in the early medieval society. It became quite popular after the death of Sultan Balban. Apart from common ones, women of royal houses were often found guilty of adultery. When the charge of adultery was confirmed Qazi Kamaluddin sentenced the mother of Prince Masud Khan (the daughter of Sultan Alauddin Khalji) to be stoned to death.<sup>19</sup>

Sultan Alauddin Khalji tried to improve the moral values of the people and fell heavily upon the ones who indulged in adultery.<sup>20</sup> When the charge of adultery was established, between a non-Muslim and a Muslim woman, the former did not cease to enjoy state protection.<sup>21</sup> Barani while imparting his verdict upon adultery remarked that capital punishment should be inflicted upon the guilty ones.<sup>22</sup>

The activities of *Mulahidan* and *Ibahatiyan* during the reign of Sultan Firozshah Tughluq illustrates the extent to which the moral standard of the society (no doubt of a particular sect) had fallen.<sup>23</sup> The followers of these sects also brought the wives, mothers and sisters of one another at night time and men committed adultery. These immoral activities degenerated the morals in society. Firozshah ordered that the leaders of the sect, who were *shias* to be beheaded; others were imprisoned or

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<sup>16</sup> *Matla-ul- Anwar*, op. cit., pp. 197-98.

<sup>17</sup> *Waqiat-i- Mushtaqi*, Tr. Rizvi S.A.A., *Uttar Timur Kaleen Bharat*, Vol.II., Department of History, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, 1958, p. 565.

<sup>18</sup> *Matla-ul- Anwar*, op. cit., pp. 197-98.

<sup>19</sup> Ibn Battuta, Tr. Mahdi Husain, op. cit., p. 86.

<sup>20</sup> *Campaigns of Alauddin Khalji*, op. cit., pp. 10-11.

<sup>21</sup> *Some Aspects of Religion and Politics in India During the 13<sup>th</sup> Century*, Delhi, Oxford University Press, 2002., p. 78.

<sup>22</sup> Barani Ziauddin, *Tarikh-i- Firozshahi*, Tr. Elliot H.M. and John Dowson, *History of India as Told by its Own Historians*, Vol. III., Low Price Publication, Delhi, 2001, pp. 254-55.

<sup>23</sup> *Campaigns of Alauddin Khalji*, op. cit., p. 12.

banished or punished so that the territory of Islam was totally purged of their weakness. Thus he toned the ethical values of the society.<sup>24</sup>

### **The Institution of Marriage:**

Islamic society was polygamous, although there was a limit of four to the number of wives permitted at any time. It was so hard to satisfy the conditions for marrying more than one woman, however, that the Quran advised monogamy. There was no limit on the number of concubines. The consensus of the *ulema* was that not more than four wives could be taken in *nikah* (permanent marriage), but under *muta* (marriage for a fixed contemporary period), any number of women could be married. The controversy was prolonged. Summing up the conflicting opinions, the historian Badauni asserted that although Imam Abu Hanifa and Imam Shafi considered *muta* marriages unlawful, Imam Malik and the *shias* accepted them as legal. However a fatwa from a Malik Qazi permitting *muta* marriage was also valid for both the *Hanafis* and the *Shafis*.<sup>25</sup>

Marriage was an occasion of jubilation and celebrations during the Sultanate period as well. In marriage ceremonies guests and hosts took part in dance and music.<sup>26</sup> Due to the dowry system the expenditure incurred at the time of marriage of a girl, marred the very sanctity of the institution. The royal household marriage served political purpose too.<sup>27</sup> In settling marriages generally the parents played an important role and the prospective bride and bridegroom had hardly any say. Even in the royal household, the final verdict of the parents was upheld.

Afif tells us that the worries of the parents increased when their daughters reached the age of puberty. They passed sleepless nights and restless days. This was also the reason why the birth of a daughter was not welcomed. While for the common masses marriage became a problem. Many of them had no money for the marriage of their daughters. Some times on account of the bounty of a Sultan like Firozshah thousands of girls were married. As a result of this indigent Muslims and widows came from all sides and got the names of their daughters registered in the *Diwan-i-*

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<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, Tughluq Firozshah, *Futuh-i- Firoz Shahi*, Tr. Rashid Sheikh Abdul , Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, 1954, p. 110.

<sup>25</sup> Rizvi, S.A.A., *The Wonder That Was India*, Vol. II, London, New Delhi, First Published , 1987, p. 200.

<sup>26</sup> *Ijaz-i- Khusravi*, , Vol. I., op. cit., p. 148.

<sup>27</sup> *Medieval Malwa*, op. cit., pp. 89-90.

*Khairat* and got large provisions for the marriage of their daughters.<sup>28</sup> It is quite evident that marriage was a great social problem which involved the economic means of the parents. Performance of the marriage of a poor man's daughter depended much upon the generosity of those who were economically well off. There are references to the collection of garments, bed sheets and other articles from the houses of nobility for the dowry of the daughters of poor parents.<sup>29</sup>

During the reign of Sultan Balban, the *Malik ul- Umara*, Fakhruddin, the kotwal made arrangement to provide dowry for the poor girls.<sup>30</sup> He was noted for his deeds of piety and charity. It is related to him that he kept constantly engaged twelve thousand men to recite the *quran*, changed his dress on each of the three hundred and sixty days of the year giving away the discarded one to poor and needy people, and even his bed sheets were changed every day. Each year he provided dowries for a thousand poor maidens.<sup>31</sup>

In this context the contribution of Sultan Firozshah Tughluq remains unsurpassed. The Sultan was greatly moved by the sorrow and misery of the common masses especially on the question of dowry. Thus he established a department known as *Diwan-i-Khairat* <sup>32</sup>under the supervision of Sayyid Amiri Miran, who was entrusted with the task of providing relief to the financially handicapped parents. The needy parents sought the help of this institution.<sup>33</sup> The genuinity of the case was examined and provisions were granted accordingly to the needy. For this purpose three degree of grants were available- first, second and third. After investigating the applicant's plea grants were bestowed upon them which was either- fifty, thirty or twenty five *tankas*.<sup>34</sup>

This provision of Sultan Firozshah Tughluq was a boon for the poor parents. It may be doubted whether this provision extended to the Hindu parents or not, the stress was mainly upon the followers of their faith.<sup>35</sup> Nevertheless masses were benefitted from this provision as they gave their daughters in marriage at an early age.

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<sup>28</sup> *History of Firoz Shah Tughluq*, op. cit., p. 83.

<sup>29</sup> *The Life and Works of Amir Khusrau*, op. cit., p. 28.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> *History of Firoz Shah Tughluq*, op. cit., p. 83.; *Tughluq Dynasty*, op. cit., pp. 422- 23.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*; *Society and Culture in Medieval India*, op. cit., p. 131.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*; *Tughluq Dynasty*, op. cit., p. 423.

<sup>35</sup> *The Foundation of Muslim Rule in India*, op. cit., p. 257.

The parents of the girls were under moral obligation to give away their daughters in marriage just at the right age of puberty. There was no fixed limit for the age of marriage. Both Hindus and Muslims favoured an early age for boys and girls. Akbar wished to interfere with these conditions and fixed the minimum age limit at sixteen years for boys and fourteen for girls. It is difficult to say how far his enactments were carried out.

But it all depended upon the availability of suitable match and the economic position of the guardians. Conferring their children in marriage and supervising the attendant customs and ceremonies was the privilege of the parents, especially the father. The marriage of their children involved many delicate and complicated problems, for instance, those of family status, ancestral rites and traditions and the social honour of the parties. The parents usually carried out their responsibilities most scrupulously in every detail. Marriage was more a family question than a personal concern of the marrying couple.<sup>36</sup>

When marriage negotiations were finalized, the parties agree to the wedding date of two children, the future bride and bridegroom. This agreement was celebrated with suitable ceremonies and was called *tilaka* or *mangni*, that is betrothal ceremony.<sup>37</sup> After this formal recognition, a date was fixed for marriage (the lagan) and elaborate preparations began. Invitations were sent out through the local barber or through special messengers to friends and relations. A *mandapa* was constructed in the house of the bride. The evenings became more lively because the whole population of a village began to join the *suhag* songs at the house of the bride or started singing these popular wedding songs in their own homes on their own account.<sup>38</sup> All sorts of sober and humorous rites and numerous superstitions to start for the wedding ceremony. Similar arrangements marked the house of the bridegroom.<sup>39</sup>

On the day of wedding the bride was adorned from head to foot.<sup>40</sup> A perusal of the contemporary writings shows that the performance of the marriage ceremonies was dominated by women. Ibn Battuta says that two nights before the consummation of the marriage, the ladies decorated the palace of Amir Saifuddin. They applied

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<sup>36</sup> *Life and Conditions of the People of Hindustan*, op. cit., p. 179.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 179-80.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 180.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> *Padmavati*, Tr. Shirreff A.G., op. cit., pp. 182-84.

henna to her hands and feet. Some entertained her with dance and music.<sup>41</sup> The courtyard where the bride was seated on a raised dais was packed with women.

For the commencement of the wedding ceremonies, finishing touches were given to the preparation for the wedding, *duar puja* (door worship) and other ceremonies were performed. At a pre-arranged hour, the bridegroom and bride appeared on the scene and sat on the newly raised platform within the *mandap*. Probably the father of the bride performed a ceremony signifying the formal gift of his daughter to the bridegroom, known as the ceremony of *kanyadan*. The couple had hems of their garments knotted together by the women to satisfy perpetual and inseparable union, this being the ceremony of *ganth*. At the end of these came the final ceremony of the seven step in circumambulation round the sacred fire. The *purohits* started the chanting of sacred texts and the womenfolk their wedding songs, while the couple and the bride's nearest relations were completing their rounds.<sup>42</sup>

If the bride was too young for the consummation of marriage, she returned to her parents after a short time and the final *rukhsat or gauna* was deferred to a later date. Various rites, ceremonies and courtesies continued to be observed for a very long time afterwards, but the great event of domestic importance was over, the daughter had formally and legally passed into another family and she was no more a part of her family or even master of herself. She belonged to her husband and abided by his will. If she was married into an aristocratic family, she was probably confined to a *harem*, where her intercourse with the rest of world was severely curtailed for the rest of her life.<sup>43</sup>

### **Mixed Marriage:**

During the period there was a large floating population of illegitimate children as a result of illicit love and disregard of social regulations about marriage. Where women were numerically inferior, men did not always bother about the caste of the women and congratulated themselves on securing a woman of any class or community. This led to mixed marriages which were very common among the Jats and the Punjabis. They accepted even Muslim wives after a rough and ready method

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<sup>41</sup> Ibn Battuta, Tr. Mahdi Husain, op. cit., pp. 78-79.

<sup>42</sup> *Life and Conditions of the People of Hindustan*, op. cit., p. 181.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 182.

of purification.<sup>44</sup> Many people owned slave girls and concubines. In the coastal regions Persians, Arabs, Portuguese and Europeans often inter married among the local people and thus created other groups of half castes which led to the emergence of new castes although there were many sects which discouraged caste as a social institution.<sup>45</sup> Mixed marriages were prevalent and there appear to have numerous examples of such marriages. For a detailed discussion on this aspect see chapter II, (Influence of Royal Harem on Imperial Politics).

As for the marriage negotiation, we can infer from contemporary works that the bride and bridegroom of the Indian Muslims had no voice in the selection of a match. In respectable families, the opinion of the girls, to be married in their marriage negotiation was regarded as something indecent and inappropriate.

In negotiating marriage great consideration was given to the lineage of the family. We are told of Syed Wajeehuddin Mohammad Mashhadi, the daroga at Tamil, had a daughter. She was chaste and pious. She had passed her marriageable age because her parents were particular about the purity of blood. She was given in marriage to Moinuddin Sijzi, although there was a great disparity of age between them. Ibn Battuta informs us that the *samira* people did not marry among other than their own and no one of the other classes married in their fold.<sup>46</sup> The Afghans usually married within their own tribe. They also took into consideration the purity of blood and did not allow their daughter's marriage with royal princes.

A careful study of the marriage ceremony shows the dignified position of the married women. The entrance of the bride into the household and family life of the bridegroom opened a new chapter of her life's career. She had to share with her husband the duties of the household. She had to nurse her children and bring them up. She was expected not to leave the house without the knowledge of her husband or without an escort. She was not to violate the tradition of her husband's house. The observance of these rules and the corresponding type of husband's character determined their happy relations.<sup>47</sup>

## Divorce:

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<sup>44</sup> *Society and Government in Medieval India*, op. cit., p. 239.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> Ibn Battuta, Tr. Mahdi Husain, op. cit., p. 6.

<sup>47</sup> Yadgar Ahmad, *Tarikh-i-Shahi*, eds. M. Hidayat Husain, Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta, 1939, p. 107.

The practice of divorce prevailed among the Muslims for breaking the social contract of marriage. If a man repeated the word divorce thrice, the divorce became complete and there was no way of getting back the divorced wife except through a long process. The divorced women were often accepted again as wives by her marriage with somebody else and consummation with somebody else might be followed by a second divorce and then only she could be married by her first husband.

In a particular case, Prince Mohammad, the eldest son of Sultan Balban, in an excited state of mind, divorced his wife when an altercation arose between them and a fit of intoxicated fury.<sup>48</sup> Unable to bear the pangs of separation of his wife, he sought the advice of *ulema*, who advised him to allow the divorced wife to be married with another person and when that person would voluntarily divorce her, she would be able to remarry her former husband. He proposed to arrange remarriage of the princess to Sheikh Sadruddin Arif, to facilitate her restoration to him, but the latter refused to divorce his new wife.<sup>49</sup> Widow Remarriage was prevalent. But amongst the upper class Hindus, widow remarriage was not allowed. They were not allowed to participate in social functions such as marriage, as their appearance was considered inauspicious. A maiden was remarried if she was not deflowered.<sup>50</sup>

## **Widow:**

No compulsion was inflicted upon the widows to perform *sati*, if they opted to lead the life of widowhood. In social arena widows were subjected to humiliation and torture. Ibn Battuta gives a detailed account of it. *Sati* was considered as praise worthy act and gave glory to her kinsman. If the lady failed to burn herself, they put on coarse clothes and lived simple life with her relatives. They were supposed to lead a life of seclusion.<sup>51</sup> And the orthodox section of the society considered that her love for her dead husband was devoid of that intensity which would have driven her to perform *sati*.<sup>52</sup> This belief indirectly gave impetus to the custom of *sati* and discouraged

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<sup>48</sup> Shaikh Jamali, *Siyar-ul -Arifin*, Matbaa-i- Rizvi, Delhi, 1311 A.H., Also see *Siyar-ul -Arifin*, M.S.S., Habibganj collection, 22/11, folios, 84a- 84b.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> *Society and Culture in Medieval India*, op. cit., p.134.

<sup>51</sup> Ibn Battuta, Tr. Mahdi Husain, p. 22. *Life and Conditions of the People of Hindustan*, op. cit., p. 189.

<sup>52</sup> *Society and Culture in Medieval India*, op. cit., p. 144; *Life and Conditions of the People of Hindustan*, op. cit., p. 189.

women to lead the life of widows. Though the widows were called upon to lead a secluded life, perhaps no restriction was placed upon their diet.

It appears that some concessions were granted to the widows in order to smoothen their hard life by the state. Sultan Iltutmish had brought forth the extensive use of the *iqta* system when Sultan Iltutmish died it was observed that in most cases widows held *iqta* after their husband's death.<sup>53</sup> There is no doubt that it provided the very purpose of the whole system. Sultan Balban resolved to wipe out this vice, which had crept into the *iqta* system.<sup>54</sup> Hence forth, the widows were deprived of the *iqtas* and a fixed allowance was assigned to them. Thus Sultan Balban deprived the widows of their privileges yet he was considerate enough to provide for their livelihood and started other provisions for their financial support.

Sultan Mohammad Tughluq, in his heart of hearts also wished for the welfare of the widows.<sup>55</sup> He established hospitals for the sick and alms houses for widows and orphans on a very liberal scale, entrusted with the task of providing relief and benefit.<sup>56</sup> Sultan Firozshah Tughluq was also concerned about the welfare of the widows. During the Lodi period *muhtasib* were entrusted the task in finding the suitable match for widows. This is how the state attempted to improve the status of widows. Thus widow remarriage proved a boon for it provided a new lease of life to the widows.

Sultan Sikandar Lodi had great reverence for Niamat Khatoon, the widow of Qutub Khan Lodi.<sup>57</sup> Niamat Khatoon joined Sultan Sikandar Lodi's camp while he was in the fortification of Narwar fort<sup>58</sup> in 1508 A.D. The Sultan treated her with due respect and honour. To show his reverence to Niamat Khatoon, prince Jalal Khan (Niamat Khatoon was his foster mother) was assigned the *jagir* of Kalpi<sup>59</sup> besides 120 horses and 15 elephants.<sup>60</sup> He was provided with a huge sum of money and was entrusted by Sultan Sikander lodi to take Niamat Khatoon to Kalpi where she was to

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<sup>53</sup> Tripathi R.P., *Some Aspects of Muslim Administration*, Central Book Depot, Allahabad, 1959, pp. 249-250.

<sup>54</sup> *Some Aspects of Muslim Administration*, op. cit., pp. 249-250.

<sup>55</sup> Law N.N., *Promotion of Learning in India During Muhammadan Rule*, London, Longmans, Green and Co., 1916, p. 45.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> *Tarikh-i- Daudi*, Tr. Rizvi S.A.A., *Uttar Timur Kaleen Bharat*, Vol.I, op. cit., p. 279.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 279.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*



be given all comforts. Sultan made all the special arrangements in consideration and sympathy for the widow of Qutub Khan Lodi.<sup>61</sup>

As noted earlier the state was perhaps particular regarding the welfare of the widows. Justice was imparted to them without any discrimination. To illustrate the fact an incident<sup>62</sup> pertaining to the reign of Sultan Balban deserves mention. Haibat Khan, a slave of Sultan Balban, in the state of utter fury murdered the son of a widow. The grieved mother pleaded the Sultan for justice.<sup>63</sup> The Sultan listened to her with patience and remarked; “The murderer is my slave. I give him to you; with your hands stab him with a knife.”<sup>64</sup> Haibat Khan, was earlier subjected to five hundred lashes for his crime and then handed over to the widows with full right to inflict the final punishment. The accused was pardoned by the widow when he pleaded for mercy but the Sultan had given her full right of punishment.<sup>65</sup> Thus justice was done to the widow and she was not neglected merely because of being a widow. The *qazi* would not hesitate to summon the Sultan to the court when the question of justice to a widow was concerned.

Though the attitude of the orthodox section of the society practically remained the same towards the widows,<sup>66</sup> but the Sultans of Delhi made an attempt to improve a lot of widows.

### **Sati:**

The study of women of our period would be incomplete without a reference to the custom of *sati*. Amir Khusrau, describing the burning of the women on the funeral pyre of her husband, observe: “though this is not allowed in Islam, yet what a great achievement it is... if this practice is made lawful amongst us, pious devotees might surrender their lives”.<sup>67</sup> Malik Mohammad Jaisi had great praise for such type of women. He says that the *sati* who burns for truth to her lord, if there is truth in her heart then the fire is cooled.<sup>68</sup> Ibn Battuta gives a detailed account of it. When a

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<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> *History of India as Told by its Own Historians*, Vol. III., op. cit., p. 101.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>66</sup> *Life and Conditions of the People of Hindustan*, op. cit., p. 189.

<sup>67</sup> *Nuh Siphir*, M.S.S.op. cit., Folio., 22.

<sup>68</sup> *Padmavati*, Tr. Shirreff A.G, op. cit., p.112.

widow burns herself, her kinfolk acquire glory and her faithfulness was highly esteemed.<sup>69</sup>

The act of burning or *sati* was performed both with the dead body of the husband and without it. If the corpse of the deceased husband was available, the wife was burnt with it. This was called *shah marna* or dying in company with. If the husband died at a distant from his wife or in certain case, as for instance when the wife was pregnant, she was burnt later with some article that belonged to her husband or some other objects that symbolized the deceased person. This was called *Anumarna* or dying in accordance with. In case of more than one wife, the privilege of being burnt with the corpse of the husband was exercised by the chief favourite and others were burnt in separate fire.<sup>70</sup>

Ibn Battuta has given a description of both varieties of *sati*. The *sati*, on hearing the news of the husband's death, first took a bath and put on her best clothes and jewels. A procession was soon formed to conduct her to the place of cremation. The Brahmans and other relations joined the procession and showered their profuse greetings on the widow on the glorious fortune that attended her. The woman took a coconut in her right hand and a mirror in her left hand and rode on a horse.

The procession started with music and drums towards a shady grove. There was a pool of water in this grove and a stone. Near the pool was a huge fire which was screened from public view. Before reaching to the scene, the *sati* first washed herself in this pool and then began making gift of her fine clothes and jewels one by one. At the end of it she borrowed a coarse unsewn cloth and put it over her body. Putting her hands together and praying to the goddess of fire, Agni, she mediated for a while; then suddenly she cast herself into the flames. Just at this moment, a clamorous noise was raised with trumpet, drums and other vessels- obviously to distract the attention of the people from the horror of the scene. Others, who were closely watching the moments of the *sati*, immediately pushed heavy logs of wood over the body of the burning woman.<sup>71</sup> This elaborate and inhumane mode by which *sati* was too much for Ibn Battuta, who fainted on the site<sup>72</sup> and thus failed to narrate more details about the custom.

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<sup>69</sup> Ibn Battuta, Tr. Mahdi Husain, op. cit., p. 23.

<sup>70</sup> *Life and Conditions of the People of Hindustan*, op. cit., p. 187.

<sup>71</sup> Ibn Battuta, Tr. Mahdi Husain, op. cit., p. 23.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

The Hindu wives who abstained from becoming *sati* brought not only dishonor to the family<sup>73</sup> but were also called upon to lead a rigorous secluded life of widowhood.<sup>74</sup> This inhumane horrible act of *sati* was considered to be an obligatory action on the part of women. It was Sultan Mohammad Tughluq who resolved to eradicate this deep rooted custom which undermined the status of women. The Sultan could not comprehend the idea that the death of the husband was the signal of the wife's end. Thus he insisted that widows henceforth should take the consent of the royal authority before performing *sati*.<sup>75</sup> Provisions for widow remarriage further shook the very foundation of the *sati* system. Since then the women who performed *sati* had the consent of the state but the incident of, no doubt was checked to a great extent.

Fusion of custom and tradition was witnessed among the Hindu and Muslims during the Sultanate period. The custom of *sati* and its spirit was accepted by the Muslim women as well. The revolt of Ainul Mulk Mahru during the reign of Sultan Mohammad Tughluq provides us positive evidence to the fact that the Muslim women were influenced by *sati*. When the news of the husband's defeat and subsequently no other information reached, Ainul Mulk's wife outrightly opted like a Hindu wife to perform *sati*.<sup>76</sup>

### **Jauhar:**

The account of funeral and posthumous rites would be incomplete without a reference to the custom of *jauhar* which can be better explained than defined. To maintain their integrity and chastity the females of the royal household performed *jauhar* in times of political crisis. They considered it better to perform *jauhar* and die in order to preserve their self respect rather than to fall into the grip of the invader's lust.<sup>77</sup> *Jauhar* was popular both in Northern and Southern India and especially amongst the Rajput females.<sup>78</sup> When a Rajput chief and his warriors were reduced to despair in an engagement, they usually killed their women and children or locked them inside an underground enclosure and set fire to the building. Then sword in

<sup>73</sup> *Life and Conditions of the People of Hindustan*, op. cit., p. 189.

<sup>74</sup> Ibn Battuta, Tr. Mahdi Husain, op.cit., p. 22.

<sup>75</sup> *Life and Conditions of the People of Hindustan*, op. cit., p. 191.

<sup>76</sup> Ibn Battuta, Tr. Mahdi Husain, op. cit., p. 109. *Life and Conditions of the People of Hindustan*, op. cit., p. 192.

<sup>77</sup> *History of Khaljis*, op. cit., p. 110.

<sup>78</sup> *Medieval Malwa*, op. cit., p. 50; *Life and Conditions of the People of Hindustan*, op. cit., p. 192.

hand, they sailed forth to court a certain but heroic death. The code of Rajput warfare did not know of surrender, and could not reconcile them to a defeat. It guided only to victory or annihilation.

Two forms of *jauhar* were witnessed. In the first, the females threw themselves in a burning pyre. In order to avoid falling into the hands of the victor. In the second form, the males finding hard to save the integrity of the females forced them to perform *jauhar*.<sup>79</sup> In both these cases, the chastity of the females was involved. In the former the females took the initiative while in the latter the males.

During the Sultanate period a great number of references can be cited when the ladies performed *jauhar*. The siege of Chittor in the year 1303 A.D. by the Sultan Alauddin Khalji stands as a glaring example. The Sultan left no stone unturned to win Padmini, the wife of Rana Ratan Singh of Chittor, Rani Padmini, a queer mixture of beauty and duty in times of utter political uncertainty opted to perform *jauhar* along with the other females.<sup>80</sup> Another instance worth quoting pertains to Ranthambhor. The political turmoil at Ranthambhor, led the chief queen of Raja Hammir, Ranga Devi to embrace the flames along with other women present in the fort.<sup>81</sup>

The existence of the second form can well be illustrated by the following details. The rebellion of Bahauddin Gushtasp during the reign of Sultan Mohammad Tughluq created problems for Rai of Kampila, the place where the rebel took refuge.<sup>82</sup> The latter fought for his safety but could not avert the crisis. Thereby it was at Rai's instigation, a pyre was set up on a hillock. And then he instructed his daughters and wives to perform *jauhar*. The women of the nobles too accompanied and embraced the flames in order in order to preserve their integrity.<sup>83</sup> *Jauhar*, like *sati* was also carried out in an elaborate way. The females took bath, coated sandal-wood paste on their body and then threw themselves into the burning pyre.

The last rites of women were performed with honour and respect. Hindu women were burnt on the pyre, set up for the occasion. Often confusion arose about the mode to be adopted for those Hindu women who loved a Muslim man and later on died. Sometimes both the lovers were buried in the same grave, as attribute to sublime

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<sup>79</sup> Ibn Battuta, Tr. Mahdi Husain, op. cit., p. 96; *Life and Conditions of the People of Hindustan*, op. cit., p. 193.

<sup>80</sup> *History of the Khaljis*, op. cit., p. 110.

<sup>81</sup> *Life and Conditions of the People of Hindustan*, op. cit., p. 192.

<sup>82</sup> Ibn Battuta, Tr. Mahdi, op. cit., p. 96; *Life and Conditions of the People of Hindustan*, op. cit., p. 193.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

love.<sup>84</sup> The ashes of the Kaftar women<sup>85</sup> were applied on the body by the people to free themselves from the influence of Kaftar women, for atleast a year.<sup>86</sup>

Ibn Battuta narrates in detail the rituals followed after the burial of a woman. The death of his daughter plunged him in utter grief. After three days *phool ceremony*<sup>87</sup> took place by her grave as a mark of respect to the departed soul. About one hundred and fifty people gathered by the side of her grave to attend the ceremony. The holy Quran was read, flowers, dry fruits, coconut and a cloth was placed upon the grave. The mourners were given rose water and betel leaf.<sup>88</sup>

Such an elaborate ritual was carried out to pray for the peace of the departed soul. Even the Sufi saints were ardent followers of this philosophy. Baba Farid gave alms and fed the poor to show his reverence to his mother. Visiting the grave was another mode by which due regards were given to the illustrious women.<sup>89</sup>

### **Purdah:**

The term *purdah* means a curtain or something to screen off; popularly it applies to the veil. When applied to women, the term signifies her seclusion in a separate building or in a segregated apartment called *harem*. Apart from being applied to the place of residence also signifies the totality of the female inmates who are thus excluded from the view of the public.

It was after the advent of the Muslims that the *purdah* system was established in India. As the Muslims became predominant in Northern India, the system of *purdah* and *gunghat* (veil) grew there rapidly. Where the influence of the Muslims was less, the *purdah* and the veil were not so well established. Even to this day, no such system exists from Rajputana to the Deccan, or only nominally.<sup>90</sup>

Of course, the low class and wage earning Muslim women could not afford the luxury of *purdah*. These are also isolated cases of Muslim ladies of high status discarding *purdah*. We are told that Raziya abandoned her female attire and appeared in public with the *quba* (cloak) and the *kulah* (hat).<sup>91</sup> She showed herself to the people

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<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 168.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 165.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>87</sup> Ibn Battuta, Tr. Mahdi Husain, op. cit., p. XVIII.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, p. XVIII.

<sup>89</sup> *History of Sufism in India*, op. cit., p. 402.

<sup>90</sup> *Society and Culture in Medieval India*, op. cit., p. 142.

<sup>91</sup> *Tabaqat-i- Nasiri*, Vol.I., op. cit., p. 460.

assembled for the Friday prayers and appealed for help. Afghan ladies gave lending hands at times of crisis. But these facts do not explain the absence of veil with the ladies of our period. It might be that the Muslims introduced certain rigidity in the observance of *purdah*, which existed in some form in the early medieval period.

Amir Khusrau's counsels to his daughter enjoining upon women to observe *purdah* which we find in his two *masnavis*, *Hasht Bahisht*<sup>92</sup> and *Matlaul Anwar*, have already been considered. Barani tells us that whenever Sultan Mohammad Tughluq entered the palace, he sent information through eunuchs so that *purdah nashin* women might hide themselves from the sight of the emperor. Afif refers to the seclusionist Muslim women of the fortress of Delhi. Women visited the mausoleum of the saints in *Palki* and *dola*.

The congregations and mixed gathering on special occasions of men and women provided an opportunity for undesirable elements. Sultan Firozshah Tughluq prohibited this practice.<sup>93</sup> The system of keeping the ladies in seclusion or carrying them in litters was convenient only to the aristocratic class of people. The underlying idea of keeping the females segregated was to avoid contact with men of opposite sex lest they should bring disgrace to the family.

According to Amir Khusrau,<sup>94</sup> "it is *purdah* which provides integrity and elevates the morality of women. Collaborating his verdict, the poet narrates that if the shell is devoid of covering the water drop inside the shell would have remained unnoticed and unprecious."<sup>95</sup> It is the covering which adds lusture and worth and finally transforms the drop into a precious pearl. Women who roam about soon fall in the eyes of men. *Purdah* is necessary for those who wait to lead a pious life. Though Amir Khusrau on one hand advocates strict *purdah*, on the other hand, he also admits the vices associated with it. The poet admits that the peculiar trait of peeping outside the house develops in the mind of secluded women.

In practice things were slightly different. The common folklore did not lead a secluded life. Many of them had to help their husbands in cultivation and other jobs. They came out to fetch water from wells and rivers and for some other jobs as well.<sup>96</sup>

<sup>92</sup> *Hasht Bihisht*, op. cit., folio. 27.

<sup>93</sup> *Futuh-i- Firozshahi*, Tr. Rashid Sheikh Abdul, op. cit., p. 110.

<sup>94</sup> *Hasht Bihisht*, op. cit., p. 27.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>96</sup> *Fawaid-ul- Fuad*, op. cit., p. 176.; Barani, Ziauddin, *Tarikh-i- Firozshahi*, Vol. I., op. cit., pp. 47-48.

All these and many more things they did in addition to the management of the household affairs and bringing up of their children. They could not afford to remain indoors and their innate modesty would not allow them to gaze at aliens and strangers. K.M. Ashraf rightly says that they moved the lapel of their *sari* or other head dress slightly over their faces when they passed by a stranger.<sup>97</sup>

Though a life of seclusion and segregation was prescribed for women, but they were not entirely confined to their houses. In order to participate in various activities women came out of their homes. Their prime mode of transport was the *palanquin*<sup>98</sup> or the *dola* and chariots. A palanquin was used as a means of transport by both men and women. But the one carrying women had silken curtains<sup>99</sup> which symbolized that it was era of *pardah* and seclusion for women.

Ibn Battuta, has vividly described the *dola* of *Makhduma-i- Jahan*, the mother of Sultan Mohammad Tughluq<sup>100</sup>. It was in the shape of a cot, knitted by silken threads, covered by bent sticks with bamboo projecting on either sides. The palanquin was generally carried by eight men.<sup>101</sup> The common women as well as women of royalty used palanquin in order to move from one place to another.

### **Their Costumes:**

For the history of Indian costume and fabrics, Persian historians specially the work of Ziauddin Barani and Shams-i- Siraj Afif are interesting. The poet laureate Amir Khusrau and Ibn Battuta also provide us with interesting information.

From these studies, it becomes clear that though they contain words in the literature of Hindu period there is an intrusion of new words which are often based on the name of places, both Indian and foreign on the materials and patterns used or else, are simply based on poetic fancies.<sup>102</sup>

Amir Khusrau in his works mention stuffs both of Foreign and Indian origin. Thus according to him Sultan Kaiqubad (1287- 1290) sent to Bughra Khan's camp embroidered cloth of Cathay and Iraq and rich silks. Among the silks are mentioned

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<sup>97</sup> *Life and Conditions of the People of Hindustan*, op. cit., p. 172.

<sup>98</sup> Ibn Battuta, Tr. Mahdi Husain, op. cit., p. 122.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>102</sup> Gupta S. P., eds. *Costumes Textiles cosmetics and Coiffure in Ancient and Medieval India*, p. 137.

*khazz*, *aksun* and *parniyan*.<sup>103</sup> *Nuh Siphir*<sup>104</sup> gives another list of foreign stuffs namely, very soft atlas, *aksun* (which is said to be a kind of silken stuff embroidered with gold), *zarfaft* (shot silk), *dibahac- ein* (Chinese brocade), *khaazz* (Persian silk) and *harir* (silk). In the *Khazainul Futuh*,<sup>105</sup> Amir Khusrau gives another list of clothes controlled by Alauddin. Alauddin ordered all packages to be opened in Dar-ul- Adl market.....there are all varieties of clothes from kirpas to harir which hide the body; from behari to gul-i- baqli, which are used both summer and winter from sir to galim which greatly differ in their fibres, from juz, to khuz, which are similar in their structure.

Amir Khusrau has superlative praise for Indian muslin, manufactured both in the North and the Deccan. Speaking about the amenities of life in Oudh which included fine qualities of muslin his poetic fancy soars high..... “cloths that redeem the past life, decoration of the person and ornament of the body- like *jhanbartali* and *bihari* that are like a pleasant gift of a springtide and sit as lightly on the body as moonlight on the tulip or a dew drop on the morning rose.”<sup>106</sup>

The dresses of women were governed by the social status and individual taste. The Muslim women’s dress comprised of kurta along with shalwar and a veil.<sup>107</sup> The women of Doab were seen wearing *lahanga*, *angiya* and *choli*.<sup>108</sup> As for the dress of the Hindu women, two varieties of dresses were used. One consisted of a long *chadar* of fine sheet of muslin (like *sari*), a *choli* (blouse) with short sleeves and a dark coloured *angiya* (bodice) for grown up girls or married ladies. The other type of dress consisted of a *lahnga* (long lose skirt), a *choli* and with a *rupatia* (long scarf).<sup>109</sup> The latter was very popular in the Doab.

Muslim ladies wore lose drawers, a skirt and a long scarf.<sup>110</sup> In addition to this, they used a veil. In daily use women avoided blue color of mourning. Bright colours and prints were preferred by ladies. Thus it appears that no marked change took place in the dresses of the ladies in this period. In Rajasthan, the Rajput women

<sup>103</sup> *Life and Works of Amir Khusrau*, op. cit., p. 69. Fn. 5.

<sup>104</sup> Khusrau Amir, *Nuh Siphir*, eds. Mirza M. W., Bombay, 1948, folio. 373. Cf., *Costumes Textiles Cosmetics and Coiffure in Ancient and Medieval India*, p. 137.

<sup>105</sup> *Campaigns of Alauddin Khalji*, op. cit., pp. 13- 14.

<sup>106</sup> *Life and Works of Amir Khusrau*, op. cit., p. 72.

<sup>107</sup> *Life and Conditions of the People of Hindustan*, op. cit., p. 213; *Society and Culture in Medieval India*, op. cit., pp. 54-55.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*



merely covered their heads with a scarf. Females labouring on building sites and in the field did not even cover their heads. The vast masses of peasant women did not wear any shrouds or especially made veil and did not live in seclusion. They moved the lapel of their *sari* or other head dress slightly over their face when they passed a stranger; their arms and their face were otherwise quite exposed.<sup>111</sup>

The garments of women were generally made of cotton, wool, and silk. *Paicha-i-shalwar*, *Khastak-i-Ijar*, *Niganda*, *dotah*, *kulah*, *dastar* were also popular dresses among the females.<sup>112</sup> The public women generally wore tight and transparent clothes.<sup>113</sup>

## Ornaments:

Ornaments added grace and charm to the feminine beauty though it was popular amongst males also.<sup>114</sup> All classes of women (women of royalty, common women, female slaves, dancing girls and public women),<sup>115</sup> were fond of wearing it. The popularity of ornaments among females baffled the minds of Amir Khusrau who advised women that *purdah* and chastity were the best ornaments for women.<sup>116</sup>

Ornaments signified *suhaag* (married life) to an Indian. They formed one of the important items of their adornments. And a widow had to cast them away. After the death of the husband, a widow wore ornaments for few days prior to the performance of *sati*.<sup>117</sup> It was after taking bath in the pond near the pyre that the widows gave all their ornaments in alms to the Brahman and then performed *sati*.<sup>118</sup> Varied type of ornaments was used from head to toe. Some of them are *shishphul* (for forehead), *jhumar* (forehead), earring, necklace, bangles, armlets, bracelet, rings, waist-belt and *payal* (for feet). The shape and design of the ornaments used by the Muslim and Hindu ladies might have differed from each other but basically they remained the same.

<sup>111</sup> *Life and Conditions of the People of Hindustan*, op. cit., p. 172.

<sup>112</sup> *Ijaz-i- Khusravi*, Vol. I., op. cit. p. 109.

<sup>113</sup> *Nuh Siphir*, M.S.S., part VII., op. cit., Folios. 45-46.

<sup>114</sup> *Life and Conditions of the People of Hindustan*, op. cit., p. 216.

<sup>115</sup> *Nuh Siphir*, M.S.S., part VII., op. cit., Folios. 45-46.

<sup>116</sup> *Hasht Bihisht*, M.S.S., Maulana Azad Library, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, unpublished, folios. 29-30.

<sup>117</sup> Ibn Battuta, Tr. Mahdi Husain, op. cit., p. 22.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*

Though Amir Khusrau<sup>119</sup> advocated against the use of ornaments, yet it appears to him, that ornaments were chief weakness of women. Each part of their limbs was decked with one piece or the other. To name a few popular ornaments were earring, bracelets ring and necklace. Generally the ornaments were made of gold and silver studded with jewels, pearls, diamonds and other precious stones. Ornaments were often given as precious gift to the guests and women in particular. The glow and glitter of ornaments was especially witnessed on ceremonies.

The ear was pierced to insert earrings.<sup>120</sup> This was done only by Hindu women for Muslim women did not follow this custom. The earrings were skillfully designed which added charm not only to the ornament but especially to the one who wore it. Artistic design of the ornaments speaks high not only of the refinement achieved by the makers but also represents the taste which prevailed during that period.

### **Cosmetics:**

Besides ornaments, ladies spent much of their time in various aids of beauty to add charm to their personality. They were very particular about their physique and looks.<sup>121</sup> It is surprising to note that Amir Khusrau, holds that beauty aids were unnecessary for they did not add any charm but brought defame to the person in the long run.<sup>122</sup>

Nevertheless several aids of beauty were used by women to add their charm. Coating of powder<sup>123</sup> was generally seen on a women's face. *Gulguna* and *ghaza*<sup>124</sup> were also used which gave a pinkish tinge to the facial make up. Amir Khusrau criticized the use of powder and advised women to wipe it, for their face would glow better in its absence.<sup>125</sup> Henna was applied to feet and hand, which provide red colour. The lips appeared juicy and red by the use of betel leaves,<sup>126</sup> which was popular amongst the females. Collyrium was applied on the eyelids which added grace to it. Often the coating of sandalwood paste was applied on the entire body.<sup>127</sup> Apart from providing charm, it had another purpose that is to kill body odour. Before performing

<sup>119</sup> *Ijaz-i- Khusravi*, Vol. V., op. cit., pp. 142-143.

<sup>120</sup> *Nuh Siphir*, M.S.S., part VII., op. cit., Folios. 45-46.

<sup>121</sup> *Ijaz-i- Khusravi*, Vol. V., op. cit. pp. 136- 137.

<sup>122</sup> *Hasht Bihisht*, M.S.S., op. cit., pp. 30- 31.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>124</sup> *Ijaz-i- Khusravi*, Vol. V., op. cit. pp. 136- 137.

<sup>125</sup> *Hasht Bihisht*, M.S.S., op. cit., pp. 30- 31.; *Matla-ul- Anwar*, op. cit., p. 194.

<sup>126</sup> *Nuh Siphir*, M.S.S., part VII., op. cit., Folios. 45-46.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*

*jauhar* women generally applied coating of sandalwood paste to avoid the foul smell on their burning. A black mole or spot was generally placed on the face of women which added more charm.<sup>128</sup>

Due attention was paid to the dressing of the hair which were well combed. In the parting of the hair vermilion, a red mark was seen on the forehead of married women. The use of mirror<sup>129</sup> was essential while applying the beauty aids. Amir Khusrau<sup>130</sup> permits the use of mirror, if the husband could afford to purchase it. He prescribed the use of mirror in a specific manner. The women should place the mirror on the legs bent upwards and look into it in such a way that more could observe her.<sup>131</sup> This was probably to avoid the exhibition of female beauty. The widows who were about to perform *sati* carried a mirror in their left hand.<sup>132</sup> Alauddin finding the fortress of Chittor impregnable, promised to return Delhi, if he could only have a look at the reflection of the fair Padmini in a mirror.<sup>133</sup>

Amir Khusrau regarded these beauty aids as the cause of defame but it appears that women in general were very much concerned about their beauty and maintenance of their grace.<sup>134</sup>

### **Education of Women:**

Islam stands for equality of mankind and gives an exalted place to women in the society. A perusal of the holy Quran enables one to understand the prophet's (PBUH) views on women. The Quran speaks highly of women and holds them responsible for forming the character of children. According to Islamic law,<sup>135</sup> no discrimination is to be made between men and women in the field of education and learning. Prior to Islam, the monopoly of man was now open to women also who excelled themselves in various faculties.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> *Hasht Bihisht*, M.S.S., op. cit., pp. 30- 31

<sup>129</sup> *Matla-ul- Anwar*, op. cit., p. 194.

<sup>130</sup> *Hasht Bihisht*, M.S.S., op. cit., pp. 30- 31.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>132</sup> Ibn Battuta, Tr. Mahdi Husain, op. cit., p. 22.

<sup>133</sup> *History of the Khaljis*, op. cit., p. 103.

<sup>134</sup> *Hasht Bihisht*, op. cit., pp. 30- 31.

<sup>135</sup> Ameer Ali, *Spirit of Islam*, Delhi, Idarah-i- Adabiyat-i- Delli, 1922, Reprinted, 1978, pp. 254-55.

<sup>136</sup> Shustery A.M.A., *Outlines of Islamic Culture*, Banglore, Banglore printing and Publishing Co., 1954, pp. 120-21.

It was the duty of parents to educate their daughters in order to enable them to develop their abilities. During childhood, they received education along with boys<sup>137</sup> in institutions generally associated with mosques. The presence of lady teachers asserts that women did carry on their education after attaining puberty. There were special institutions for female education located at various places such as Cairo, Baghdad and Damascus.<sup>138</sup> Women were also instructed in various arts as sewing, spinning, embroidery, music, poetry, theology<sup>139</sup> and in other spheres of learning.

Arab ladies were extremely fond of poetry and recitation and some of them have left their compositions.<sup>140</sup> Many ladies participated in poetic contests and discussions in the reign of Harun and Mamun.<sup>141</sup> Zubaida, the wife of Harun, was herself a famous poetess and was also an accomplished speaker. She rivaled her husband in building hospitals, colleges and other public institutions.<sup>142</sup> Oilayya excelled in music and poetry. Sukaina, the daughter of Husain and the granddaughter of Ali, served as a solace of poets, jurists and learned scholars.<sup>143</sup>

By the tenth century A.D. India became famous as an important Islamic country to which Muslims thronged from all parts of the Islamic world. So the education was based on the same pattern as imparted in other Islamic countries i.e. religious education. After Mahmud, Mohammad Ghorī was one of the most important rulers who played a vital role in sowing the seed of education in India. He in spite of his political pre occupations, contributed to the cause of education and established some schools in Ajmer. Qutbuddin Aibak who loved learned people, established mosque schools in his province where religious education was imparted to the masses. The Muizzi college at Delhi was one of the best centres of learning in the reign of Sultan Raziya. Nasiruddin was also a great scholar and he appreciated and rewarded scholarship.

Sultan Ghiyasuddin Khalji established a *madarasa* exclusively for women<sup>144</sup> because he considered their education essential for the progress of the country. Sultan Firozshah Tughluq being an eminent educationist deputed teachers to various parts of

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<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 525.

<sup>138</sup> *Outlines of Islamic Culture*, op. cit., p. 513.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 525.

<sup>140</sup> *The Spirit of Islam*, op. cit., . P. 202.

<sup>141</sup> Amir Ali, *A short History of Saracens*, Kitab Bhawan, New Delhi, 1977, p. 455.

<sup>142</sup> *Outlines of Islamic Culture*, op. cit., p. 773.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, p 772.

<sup>144</sup> Alavi S.M. Ziauddin, *Muslim Educational Thought in the Middle Ages*, Atlantic Publishers, New Delhi, 1988, p. 8.

the empire for the sake of imparting instruction to the people. He repaired and reconstructed old *madrasas* which were lying in ruins. He also established new schools and colleges with residential accommodation and paid handsome remuneration to the teachers. Some of the colleges attracted teachers from foreign countries. Sultan Sikandar Lodi gave fresh impulse to the art of writing, compilation and translation.<sup>145</sup>

All these Muslim rulers patronized Islamic education. The courses of study were identical to that of Iraq, Syria, Spain and Khurasan. Primary schools were located in mosques where children learnt the Quran. The syllabi of the institutions of higher learning included Arabic language and literature, Persian, Quran, Hadith, Fiqh, al- Kalam, logic, astronomy and mathematics. In this period natural sciences and various schools of philosophy were not included in the syllabi but later on under the Mughals these subjects and many more secular subjects were added.

Though ladies in medieval India, did not attain to that degree of literary education as Muslim ladies of Baghdad and Spain, yet with such luminaries as Raziya Sultan, Gulbadan begum, Mehr Angez, Islam Khatoon etc. Muslim women in India had no reason to fear comparison with contemporary Muslim women in other parts of the world. A study of contemporary literature, religion or otherwise, tells us much about the inner life and thoughts of the people, and also of the state of learning acquired by women who flourished in religious circles and courts of kings.

The Sultan of Hinawar, in south-west coastal region of India, who was an Arab descendant, seems to have been particularly keen about the education of his female subjects. Ibn Battuta who visited his kingdom during his world tour, informs us that there were as many as thirteen girls schools in his capital, and the women of that place were pretty, chaste and knew the holy Quran by heart.<sup>146</sup>

The princesses of the royal families were educated by learned teachers. But the details regarding the mode of education is insufficient. Generally education was imparted to the girls at home and the curriculum largely consisted of religious subjects. Amir Khusrau asserts that the women of royalty should be well versed in the use of arms.<sup>147</sup> The emergence of Raziya as an accomplished Sultan indicates that

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<sup>145</sup> *Muslim Educational Thought in the Middle Ages*, Atlantic Publishers and Distributors, New Delhi, 1988, p. 8.

<sup>146</sup> Jaffar S.M., *Education in Muslim India*, Idarah-i- Adabiyat-i- Delli, New Delhi, 1973, p. 189.

<sup>147</sup> *Matla-ul- Anwar*, op. cit., pp. 122-123.

princesses were subjected to military training along with primary education.<sup>148</sup> She was an accomplished poetess and could recite the holy Quran correctly.<sup>149</sup> Thus being women of literary taste, she stood for the cause of its propagation. She patronized men of letters and Madarsa-i-Nasiriya of Delhi became the centre of learning during her reign.<sup>150</sup>

We also know that many of the Muslim widows considered their sacred duty to impart religious education to girls and to teach them the holy Quran. There were numerous schools kept in private houses for the instruction of girls. They have survived to our own times and are commonly found in India now a days.<sup>151</sup>

Prior to Raziya, the early instance of an educated princess to be found is, Mah Malik popularly known as Jalal-ud Duniya-ud-Din, granddaughter of Alauddin Jahansuz, Minhaj us siraj speaks highly of her erudition which created a place for herself in literary field. She earned fame especially because of her excellent hand writing, which was like pearls.<sup>152</sup> Chand Sultana, the most favourite heroine of the Deccan and a woman of extraordinary talent, also appears to have had an excellent education. She was endowed with great qualities and a rare variety of accomplishments. Skilled as she was and equally accomplished in the arts of the age. Almost all the people of her surrounding areas believed that no one could play half so beautifully on the lute or sing half so sweetly as she did. She spoke Arabic, Persian, Turkish, Kanarese and Marathi with fluency. Painting flowers was one of her favourite hobbies.<sup>153</sup>

Bibi Razi, the wife of Sultan Mahmud Sharqi of Jaunpur contributed much in the literary field. She extended patronage to learned men and opened a number of *madrasas* and colleges. Provision for stipend for students and teachers were made by her to encourage the cause of education. The Sharqi Sultanate of Jaunpur became an important centre of education during her lifetime.

Women must have been educated at home by their elderly and learned relations. Ratnawali, the wife of Puran Mal possessed great poetic gifts. Mira Bai, one

<sup>148</sup> Law N.N., *Promotion of Learning in India During Muhammadan Rule*, London, Longmans and Co., 1916, p. 200; *Life and Conditions of the People of Hindustan*, op. cit., p. 55.

<sup>149</sup> *Promotion of Learning in India During Muhammadan Rule*, op. cit., pp. 21-22.

<sup>150</sup> *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, op. cit. p. 460, Tr. Raverty H.G., Vol. I., op. cit., p. 644; *Promotion of Learning in India During Muhammadan Rule*, op. cit., p. 22.

<sup>151</sup> *Education in Muslim India*, op. cit., p. 192.

<sup>152</sup> *Promotion of Learning in India During Muhammadan Rule*, op. cit., p. XXVIII ; *Education in Muslim India*, op. cit., p. 192.

<sup>153</sup> *Education in Muslim India*, op. cit., p. 193.

of the best representatives of Hindu culture, wrote *Narayana Mohra*, Gita Govind's *tika*<sup>154</sup> etc.

Although female education was restricted due to *purdah* system, yet there was no doubt that young girls were taught in schools.<sup>155</sup> Boys and girls received education together till primary standard after which girls were privately educated or set to schools which were especially meant for them. Girls often went to schools maintained in private houses<sup>156</sup> and they also received education in their own houses from learned ladies or old men who served as private tutors.<sup>157</sup>

It is alleged that one of the reason why Mohammad Tughluq attacked Qarajal hill was the desire to possess the women of that country who were famous for their talent and accomplishments.<sup>158</sup> In the seraglio of Sultan Ghiyasuddin Khalji of Malwa (1469-1500 A.D.), among the fifteen thousand women, were school mistresses, musicians, women to recite prayers, and persons of all professions and trades lived which proved that he gave special attention to the education of women.<sup>159</sup> The presence of school mistresses in the imperial *harem* testifies to the fact that the ladies in the palace were taught by them.

Still another evidence in *Qanun-i-Islam* of Jafar Sharif<sup>160</sup> in this interesting book, the learned author has given an excellent account of the system of female education then prevalent in the Muslim India. He informs us that regular girls schools existed in those times and further adds that *maktab* ceremony was performed for both boys and girls when they commenced their schooling in the *maktab* and they were also given *Eidi* (a sort of blessing for the student inscribed on coloured paper called *Zarfishani*) alike which was a common practice. At this time they made rich presents to the honoured Ustad in an assemblage called for the purpose. This was known as the Maktab Ceremony. The same authority is responsible for the information that a girl before starting a new lesson and especially when the holy Quran was read out once, it was customary to entertain her tutor and to offer him money and presents sent by her

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<sup>154</sup> *Society and Culture in Medieval India*, op. cit., p. 144.

<sup>155</sup> *Promotion of Learning in India During Muhammadan Rule*, op. cit., p. 201.

<sup>156</sup> *Education in Muslim India*, op. cit., p. 192.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 189- 90.

<sup>158</sup> Prasad Ishwari, *History of Qaraunah Turks in India*, Allahabad, Central Book Depot, 1974. P. 132.

<sup>159</sup> *Education in Muslim India*, op. cit p. 189. *Promotion of Learning in India During Muhammadan Rule*, op. cit., p. 201.

<sup>160</sup> Jafar Sharif, *Qanun-i- Islam*, cf. *Education in Muslim India*, op. cit., p. 190; *Promotion of Learning in India During Muhammadan Rule*, op. cit., p. 200.

parents. He also refers to presents given to the teacher by the parents of the girl on finishing the holy Quran- an important education in itself. On such occasion half holiday was granted to the whole *maktab*.<sup>161</sup> The day was the occasion of jubilation and celebration. The relationship between the teacher and pupil was based on love and co- operation.

Thus we see that numerous institutions established by the Sultans and their nobles such as the Firozi Madrasa provided boarding and lodging to the teachers and students. Handsome stipends were paid to students. These centres of higher learning along with other educational institutions discussed in the preceding pages have explained the large network of education that was put up by the Sultans.

The patronization of scholars and intellectuals played a pivotal role in creating a congenial atmosphere for the stimulation of learning and literature. Due to the keen interest taken by the Sultans not only the religious sciences but also the rational sciences like astronomy, medicine, mechanical, arts etc. were developed and promoted. Besides making occasional grants, some of the Delhi Sultans and the nobles of the state were enlightened enough to realize the importance of learning, and as such they started educational institutions with rich endowments. The provincial dynasties also brought about considerable developments in literature and learning.

The education of women, in presence of child marriage and *purdah*, was generally neglected, especially women of the royal household took active part in the promotion and patronization of education of learning. As a result of such impetus given by the Sultan, the people were sure to imbibe a great love for education and knowledge, and hence we find that distinguished scholars from all over the Muslim world were invited and encouraged to live in India by the inducement of pensions and conferment of distinction. The state granted pensions and *jagirs* to a selected few, while others were patronized by the nobles of the state, for such patronage was considered a virtuous deed. In general the education of women did not receive much encouragement. But the whole society was not indifferent towards their education.

Exploitation of women as pleasure pursuit was common but status in social and political arena, her dignity was also prevalent. She did not enjoy a very high place in society. The foregoing discussion would indicate that the status of women in the

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<sup>161</sup> *Education in Muslim India*, op. cit., p. 191; *Promotion of Learning in India during Muhammadan Rule*, op. cit p. 201.



society was in a state of flux. She enjoyed certain privileges yet there were considerable elements which curtailed her independence.

## Conclusion

In the foregoing chapters, an earnest endeavour has been made to explain, on the basis of primary as well as existing secondary sources, the position occupied by women during Thirteenth and Fourteenth Century A.D. The study has brought forth women to the centre of historical process and attempts at studying the socio- political history of the Delhi Sultanate with an intention to provide space to the women perspective. Our study propels the conclusion that women also played quite important roles freely and equally in all walks of life and contributed for the continuation and development of culture.

Earlier studies on the society of the Sultanate period had concerned mainly on the social life in general and included a description of women among these a comprehensive treatment of the entire panorama of royal and lay woman had been long been awaited.

Our study reveals that there was a significant participation of women in all spheres of work in Sultanate period. It is of course, common knowledge that women played a pre- eminent role in the domestic/ household sphere, and that it was primarily owing to their labour that the organization of the family household was maintained. The study has reinforced this assumption, and has argued that it was women's work in the household primarily that ensured material and symbolic reproduction of the society.

Further the image of aristocratic household / harem has been as yet reconstructed merely as a zone of sexual activity, our findings have shown their role otherwise. The public realm is associated with the exercise of power and control over persons; women exercised a great influence on conduct of the government.

In the course of our discussion, we have seen in the context of Sultan Raziya, observing her talent and quality befitting a ruler, her father Sultan Iltutmish nominated her as the heir to the Sultanate after the death of her most capable son, Prince Nasiruddin Mahmud. Raziya Sultan was encouraged by her father to engage in the army and taking leadership that developed a wonderful capacity of leadership qualities, responsibilities and bravery as her characteristics.

No matter how long she ruled over the country, her reign is very significant as she was the only female monarch of the Delhi sultanate who directly ruled over the

country by winning the throne on her own strength. She discharged her duties in most appropriate manner by appearing before the public without veil, dispensed justice, took active part in warfare, appointments of the officers etc. She seems to have taken keen interest in education also. She was fond of music and gave musicians royal patronage and also to men of letters. Minhaj was entrusted the task of supervision of Madarsa-i-Nasiriya which became a centre of learning in her region. In her personal life we have seen that she recited the Quran and offered prayers in a proper manner which shows that she was a true practicing Muslim. She had a fair knowledge of several other Sciences and possessed all the qualities necessary for a wise ruler. No matter, in spite of prevailing *purdah* system, she discarded it and appeared before the public.

The example set by Raziya gradually became a source of inspiration and encouragement to the other royal ladies to participate in politics. Harem in itself was a very large social and political unit. The political participation of women is nonetheless very crucial and went on to shape the medieval political system.

The first evidence which is found in the contemporary sources, is the name of Shah Turkan, the queen wife of the Sultan Iltutmish. She was so meritorious that she rose to the position of the chief queen of the Sultan from a position of Turkish slave.

Interestingly enough, is her journey to power and controlling politics after the death of her husband, and going beyond the will of the Sultan in appointing her son Ruknuddin Firoz in place of Raziya's nomination. Later during the Khaljis, we find the influence of *Malika-i- Jahan*. Next we have seen, the role of the mother of Sultan Mohammad Tughluq, *Makhduma-i- Jahan*, who was the queen mother and the most virtuous lady. Khudavandzada, the sister of Mohammad Tughluq also enjoyed a respectable position.

Painting, also form a significant source to provide the first hand information which has not been earlier utilized in the context of the study of Sultanate period. From these paintings we get visual information, which we may not get from the written text. These painting have illustrated the culture of the period, glimpses of the customs, status of women and influence of composite culture after the coming of the Turks to the country in Thirteenth century. It was a fusion of Persian as well as indigenous elements. Numerous painting of early medieval times exhibit outdoor scenes. They cover the various aspects of everyday life. These paintings show women at work also.

We have sample paintings from Jain illustrations, some of the famous illustrated manuscripts are *Kalpasutra* and *Kalakacharya Katha* in the collection of the Chhatrapati Shahu Vastu Sangrahalaya (formerly, Prince of Wales Museum), Mumbai, Mandu *Kalpasutra* of 1439 A.D. preserved at the National Museum, New Delhi, *Kalpasutra* painted at Jaunpur, dated A.D. 1465 at Narasimhajina Polna Jnana Bhandar, Baroda. These illustrations reveal different kind of style illustrated at different provinces. Women are shown in different positions, wearing sari, adorning ornaments like necklace, bracelets, bangles, head ornaments etc. which is a fine source of the study of culture of that time.

Besides these, there is another kind of paintings which can be called as *Bourgeois* style. In this category *Khamisa* of Amir Khusrau, *Sikandarnama* painting, *Hamzanama* come. In these paintings we find Arab and Persian influence. Here we find Persian text written in the background and women are shown wearing long tunic, *odhni* behind their head etc. while the Indian costume comprises *sari*, *choli* and *odhni* etc. In *Hamzanama* painting we see a woman at work as she is the water carrier meeting Hamza. In another painting of *Hamzanama*, we find some dancers performing before Hamza.

We find the illustration of *Laur-Chanda*, the versified love story composed by Mulla Daud. Five illustrated leaves from the copy of *Laur-Chanda* are in the collection of the Bharat Kala Bhawan, Banaras. We find here the Awadhi texts on the reverse is written in Persian characters. During the time of Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq, we find a cookery book, the *Nimatnama* in which Certain traits of the Turkoman style of Persian painting were adopted. It is preserved in the Indian Office Library, London The text of the *Nimatnama* deals with the most detectable recipes of medicine, cosmetics, perfumes etc.

These paintings indeed are beautiful examples for the study of the period which attract the attention of the reader. The subject matter throws some interesting side lights on medieval culture.

In the context of religion we learn that there was strong influence of Sufism on the society. Various Sufi saints like Nizamuddin Auliya, Baba Farid, Nasiruddin Chirag Dehlavi, Maualna Asuli etc. had a long lasting effect on the mind of the people. They were generous enough towards women and there are various instances to show their piety and love towards women.

In spite of this we see that as in the eyes of God, men and women are equal, there are references of female Sufis whose influence can be seen in general and also as mother and wives of the Sufis. There are ladies which we have discussed earlier who excelled in the field of religion and influenced the society not less than the male Sufis. They showed miraculous power and inclination toward God.

We further argue that in view of the lack of concrete boundaries between the private and the public spheres in Sultanate society, women played an extremely important part in the so called public spheres as well. Our study has brought out the diverse nature of work performed by women in public and private life.

The household is a site of work and involves a large range of activities, in all which women pre- dominate. Here she is endowed with so called natural activities that is of cooking food, tending cattle, bringing fuel and water, taking care of the children and old and so on. These are treated as external to the productive domain. It was not realized that her labour was essential to the social/ economic viability of the place concerned.

We have seen in the foregoing chapter that they were excellent dancers and singers who even earned their livelihood through this profession. There was hardly any occasion where singing and dancing was not found. It was considered a discourtesy not to have them on ceremonial occasions. It was a highly specialized field and they were taught to do so.

There were a large number of female slaves who excelled in art and amusement and even they were a significant element in the institution of slavery where they served both domestic works and for the company of their masters. They were skilled in playing chess and chaupal, worked as royal guards, spies, serving their masters etc. We also come to know about their significance in household chores, in dance and music and concubines etc. Institution of public women was quite popular at that time. These women had cut their all ties from family and relations but they did maintain overarching links with the patriarchal culture by reinforcing social norms imposed on them as different class.

Regarding the common women, we learn that they were dependent on the royal household for their need to be fulfilled. However it appears from the writings of Amir Khusrau that they adorned expensive cloths, ornaments, cosmetics etc. While Amir Khusrau emphasizes on morality and chastity as an essential element to adorn a woman. Here we also get clear knowledge of various institutions and ceremonies like

marriage, divorce, widowhood, *Sati* system, *jauhar*, *purdah*, chastity of women etc. Ibn Battuta has given vivid description about common women, customs, rituals and social evils of the society. Education of women was somehow similar to the Islamic countries. Religious education was imparted to women at home by private tutors and in *maktabs* and *madarsas*.

As the theme of my work is women depicted in the sources of the Delhi Sultanate during Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries, we reach to the conclusion that women excelled in the field of performing art. They were capable rulers, they had power to reign over the country. They had tact and diplomacy to manipulate things to grab the power and authority even for their self interest. While in the context of Raziya Sultan we can say that women enjoyed the right to rule and they had access to education and procurements to other talents like riding, art of warfare etc. The lay women similarly played significant role in the society.

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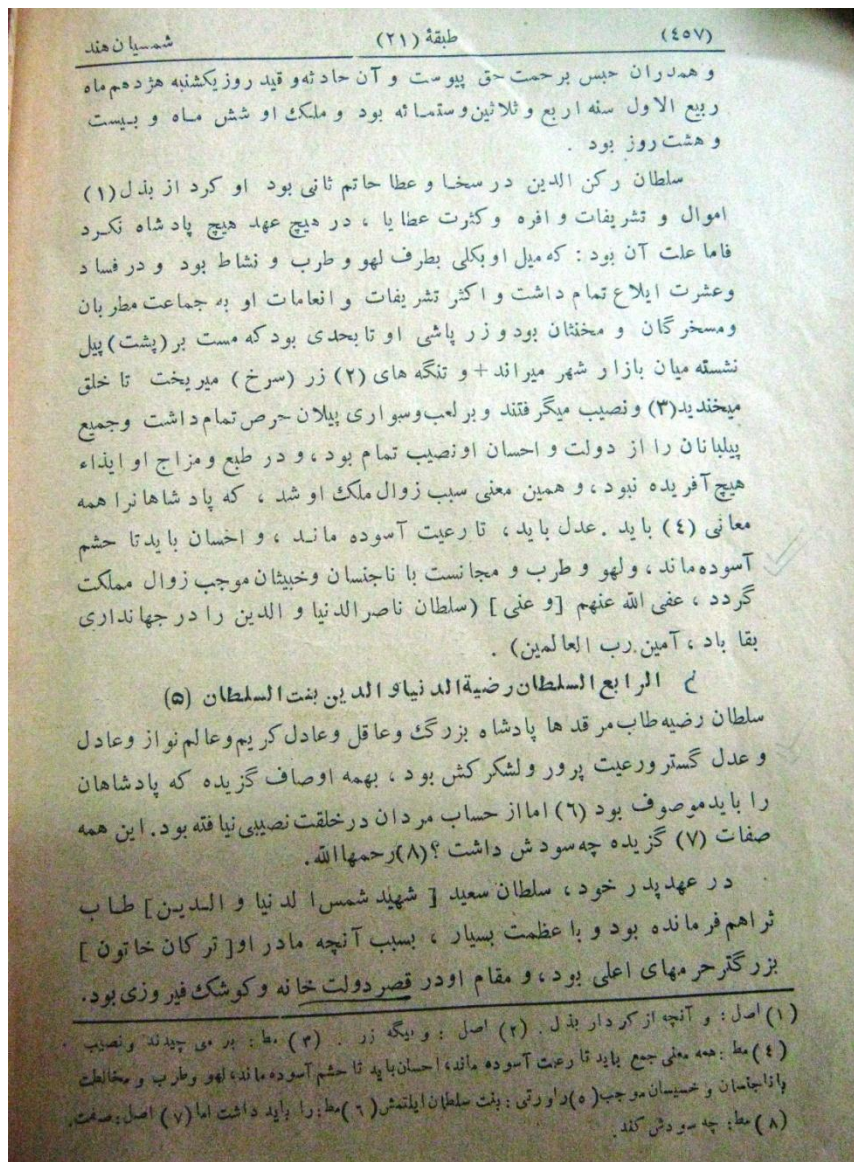
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## Appendix I

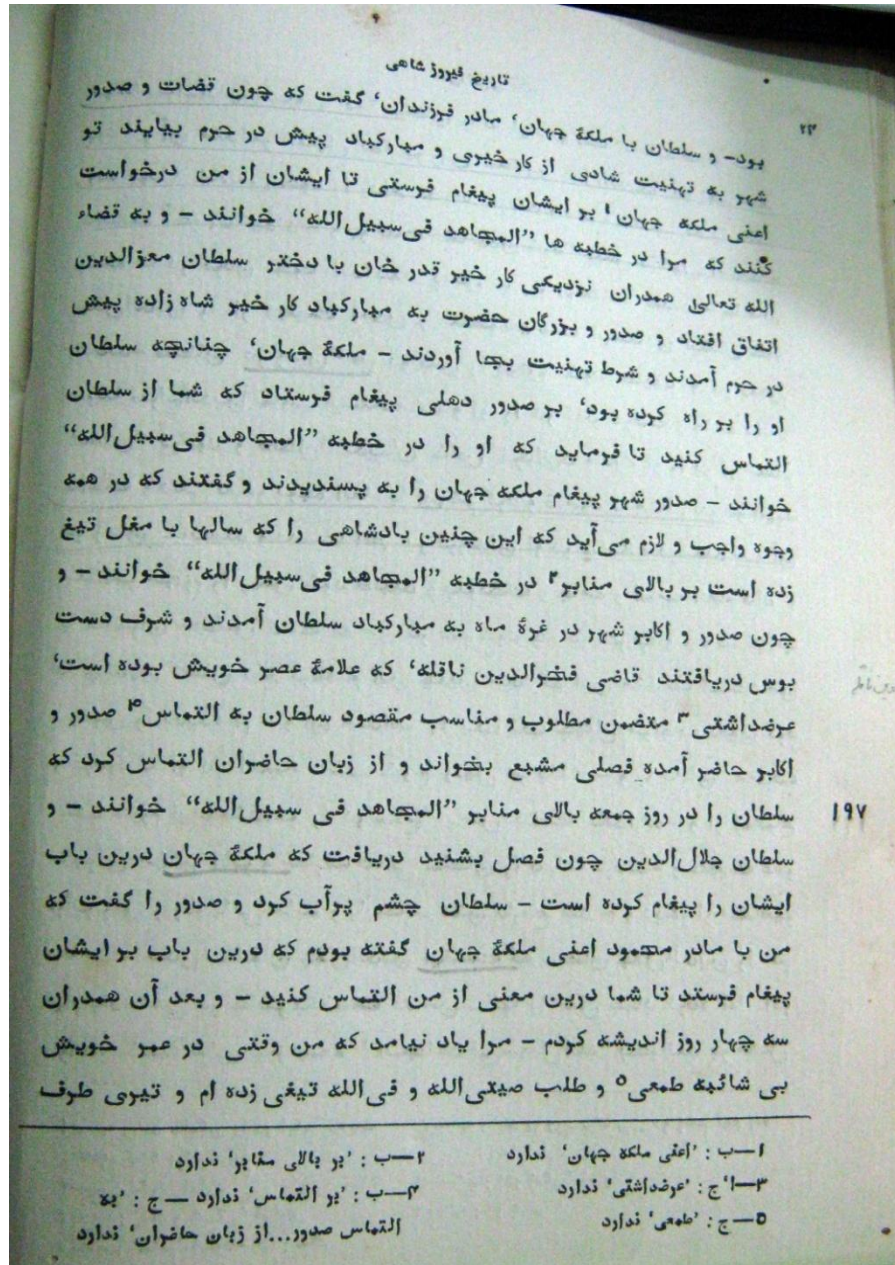
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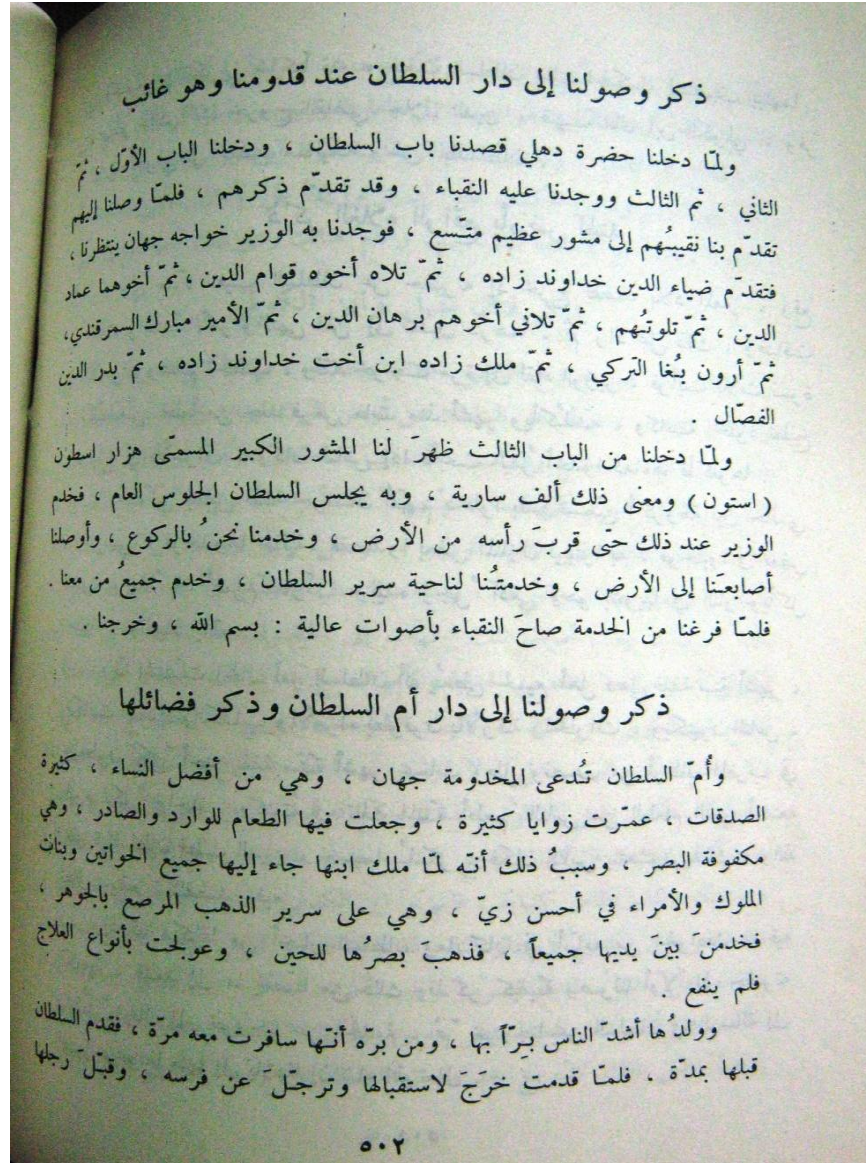
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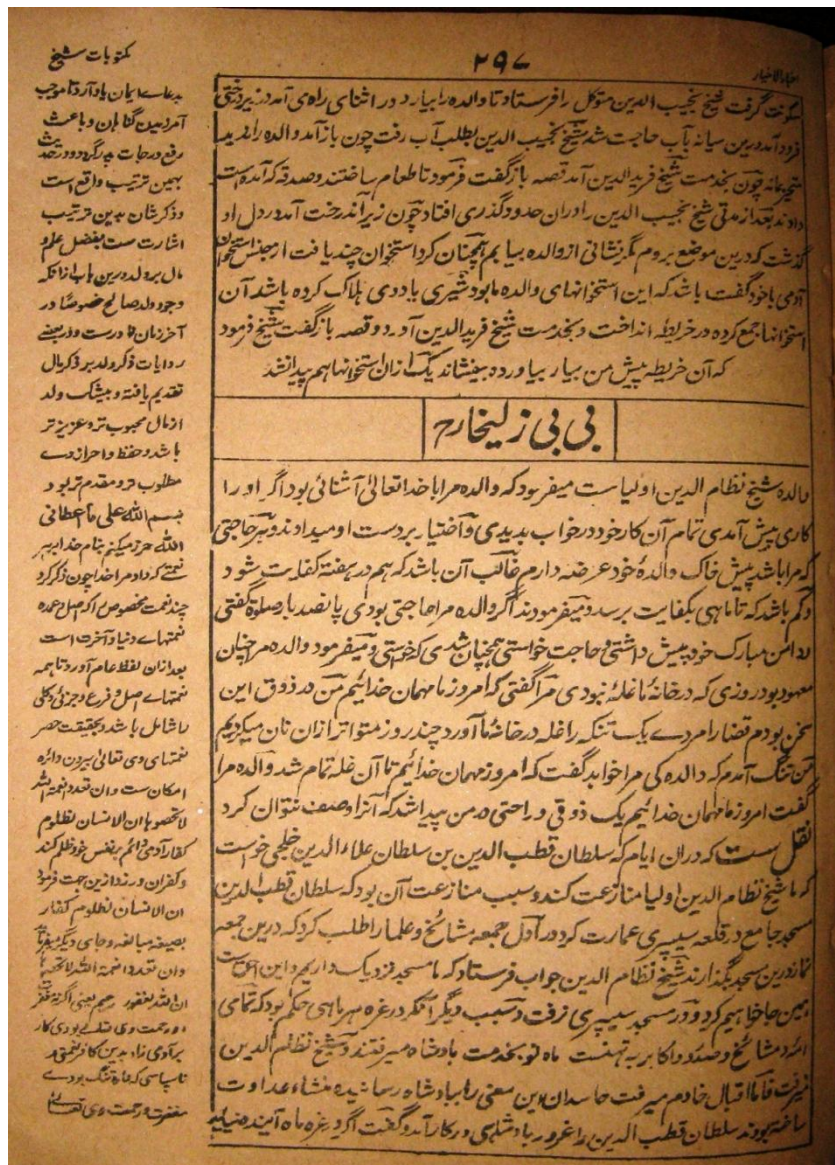
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